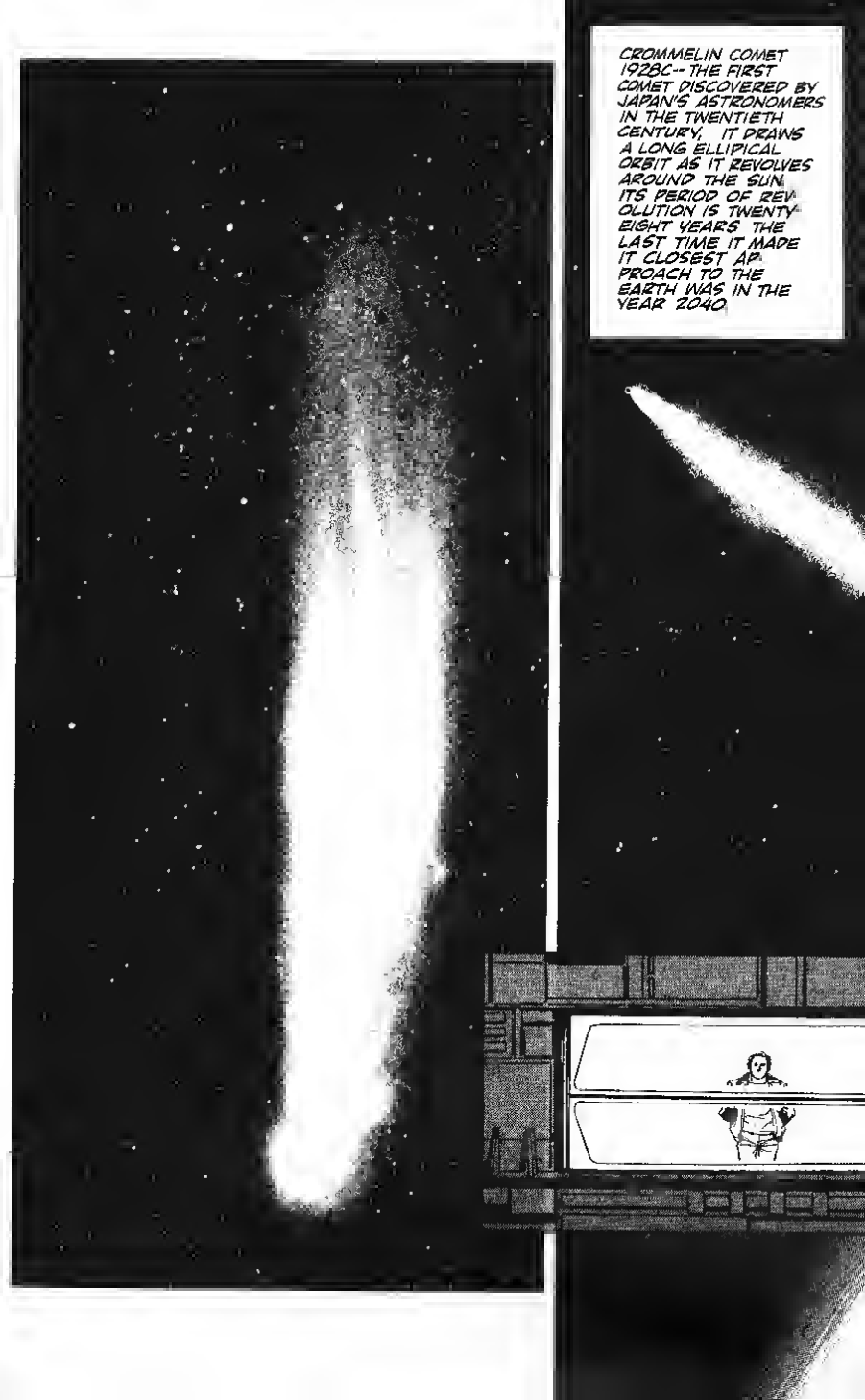
VIZ PREMIERE COMICS
$4.25 USA/$5.75 CAN

20TH CENTURY BOYS

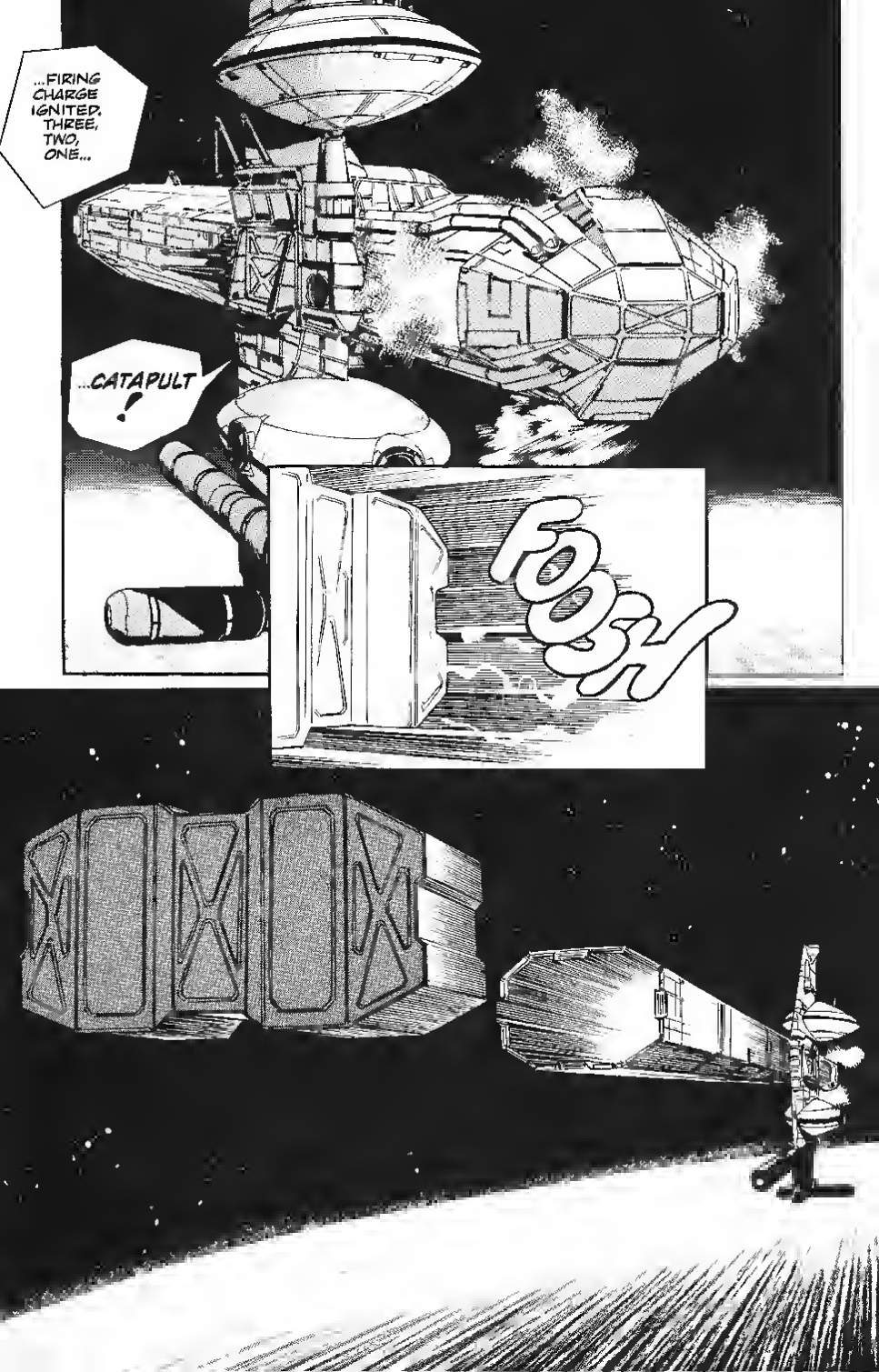
NO. 7

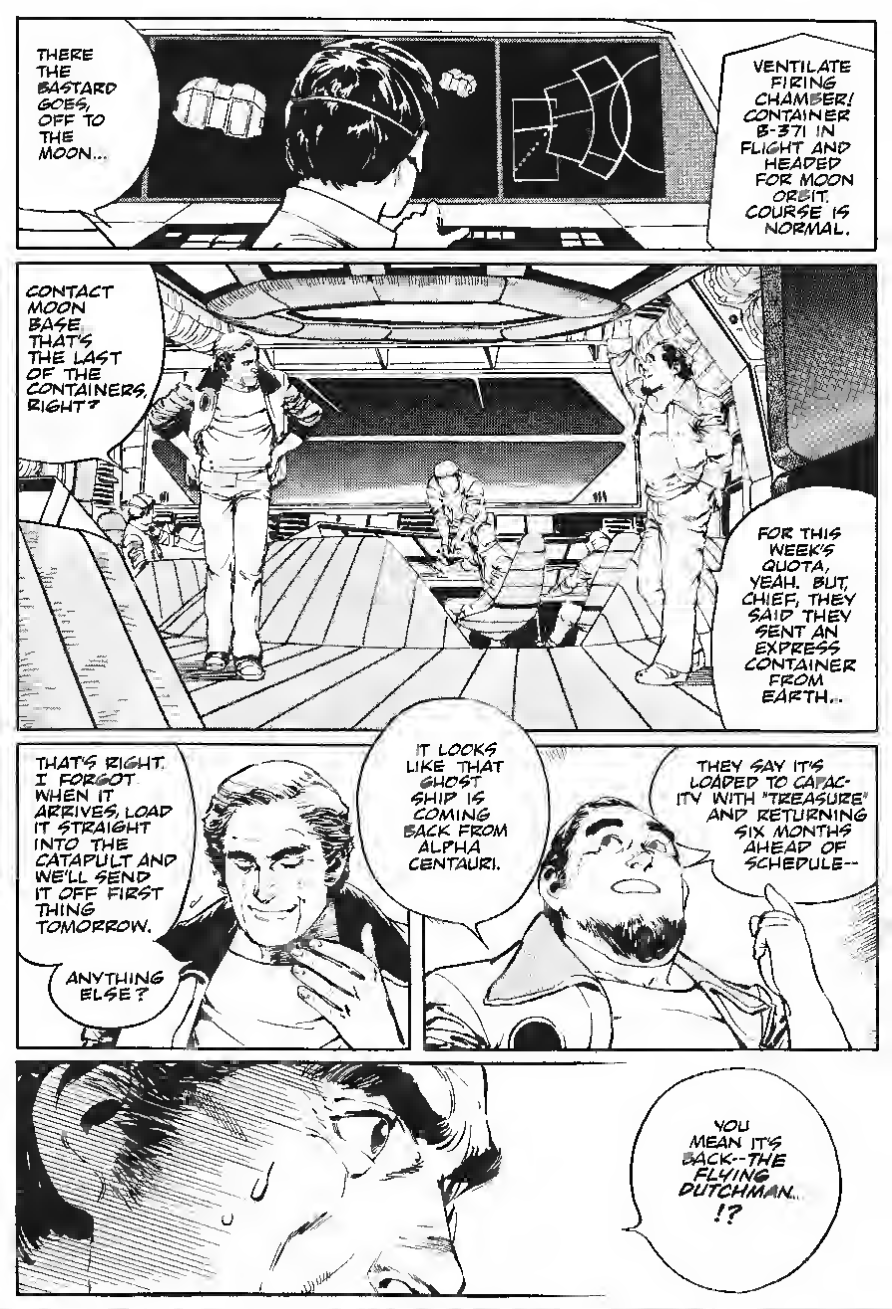
Story and Art by
YUKINOBU HOSHINO

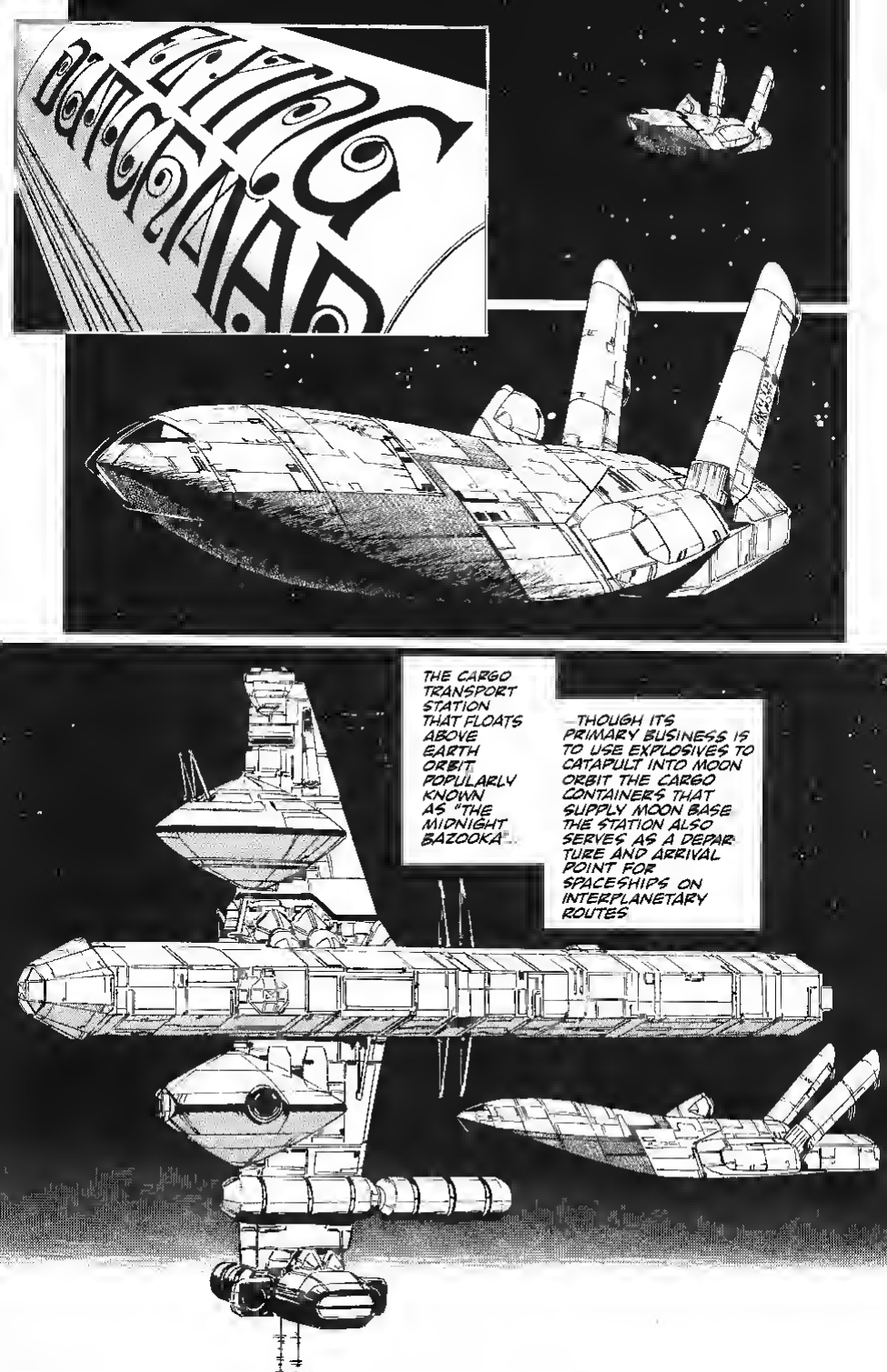
NIGHT 14: Elliptical Orbit


CROMMELIN COMET 1928BC--THE FIRST COMET DISCOVERED BY JAPAN'S ASTRONOMERS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. IT DRAWS A LONG ELLIPICAL ORBIT AS IT REVOLVES AROUND THE SUN. ITS PERIOD OF REVOLUTION IS TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS. THE LAST TIME IT MADE IT CLOSEST APPROACH TO THE EARTH WAS IN THE YEAR 2040.

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO I WAS YOUNG... BUT I'M NOT ANY MORE. AND THE NEXT TIME IT COMES AROUND TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS FROM NOW...
.. WILL MY AGING EYES STILL OPEN WIDE ENOUGH TO SEE ITS BEAUTY?
OUR BACK-DOOR BUDDY'S WAITING AT THE CATAPULT WITH HIS ASS HANGING OUT.
MAN, YOU'VE GOT NO CLASS! IT'S CALLED A CONTAINER! IS IT PACKED FULL OF STUFF?
AS TIGHT AS WE COULD MANAGE!
LOADING OF FIRING CHARGE COMPLETE. TRANSPORT CONTAINER B-371 READY FOR CATAPULT. CATAPULT MOUTH IS CLEAR--SIGN BLUE. STARTING COUNTDOWN. TEN, NINE, EIGHT, SEVEN..


...FIRING CHARGE IGNITED. THREE, TWO, ONE...
...CATAPULT!
FOOSH


THERE THE BASTARD GOES, OFF TO THE MOON...
VENTILATE FIRING CHAMBER! CONTAINER B-371 IN FLIGHT AND HEADED FOR MOON ORBIT. COURSE IS NORMAL.
CONTACT MOON BASE THAT'S THE LAST OF THE CONTAINERS, RIGHT?
FOR THIS WEEK'S QUOTA, YEAH. BUT, CHIEF, THEY SAID THEY SENT AN EXPRESS CONTAINER FROM EARTH..
THAT'S RIGHT. I FORGOT WHEN IT ARRIVES, LOAD IT STRAIGHT INTO THE CATAPULT AND WE'LL SEND IT OFF FIRST THING TOMORROW.
ANYTHING ELSE?
IT LOOKS LIKE THAT GHOST SHIP IS COMING BACK FROM ALPHA CENTAURI.
THEY SAY IT'S LOADED TO CAPACITY WITH "TREASURE" AND RETURNING SIX MONTHS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE--
YOU MEAN IT'S BACK--THE FLYING DUTCHMAN... !?


THE CARGO TRANSPORT STATION THAT FLOATS ABOVE EARTH ORBIT POPULARLY KNOWN AS "THE MIDNIGHT BAZOOKA"...
...THOUGH ITS PRIMARY BUSINESS IS TO USE EXPLOSIVES TO CATAPULT INTO MOON ORBIT THE CARGO CONTAINERS THAT SUPPLY MOON BASE THE STATION ALSO SERVES AS A DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL POINT FOR SPACESHIPS ON INTERPLANETARY ROUTES

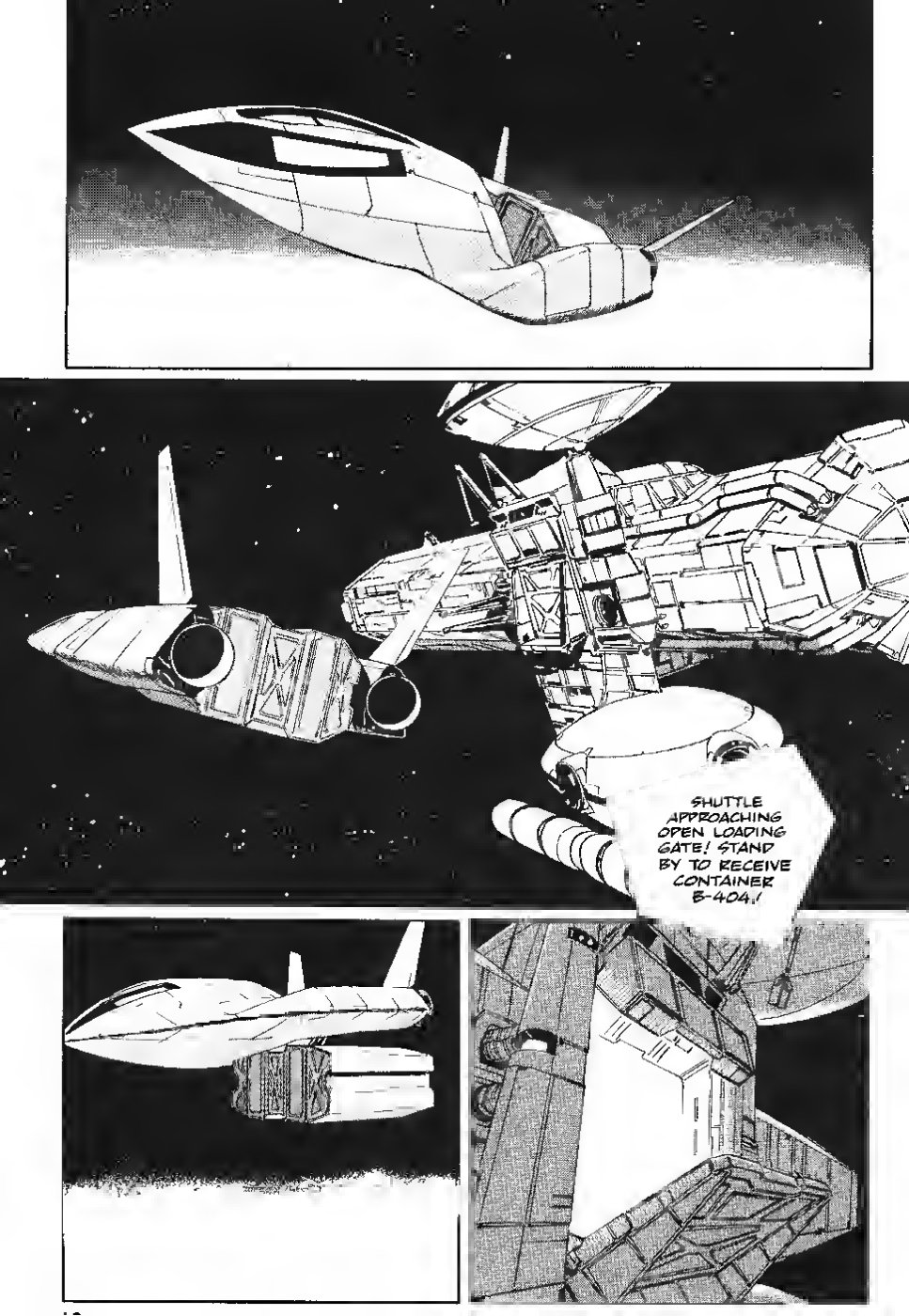
IT HAS BEEN SOME FIFTEEN YEARS SINCE THE CARGO STATION LAST GREETED THE RESOURCE TRANSPORT SHIP FLYING DUTCHMAN...
KATOONG

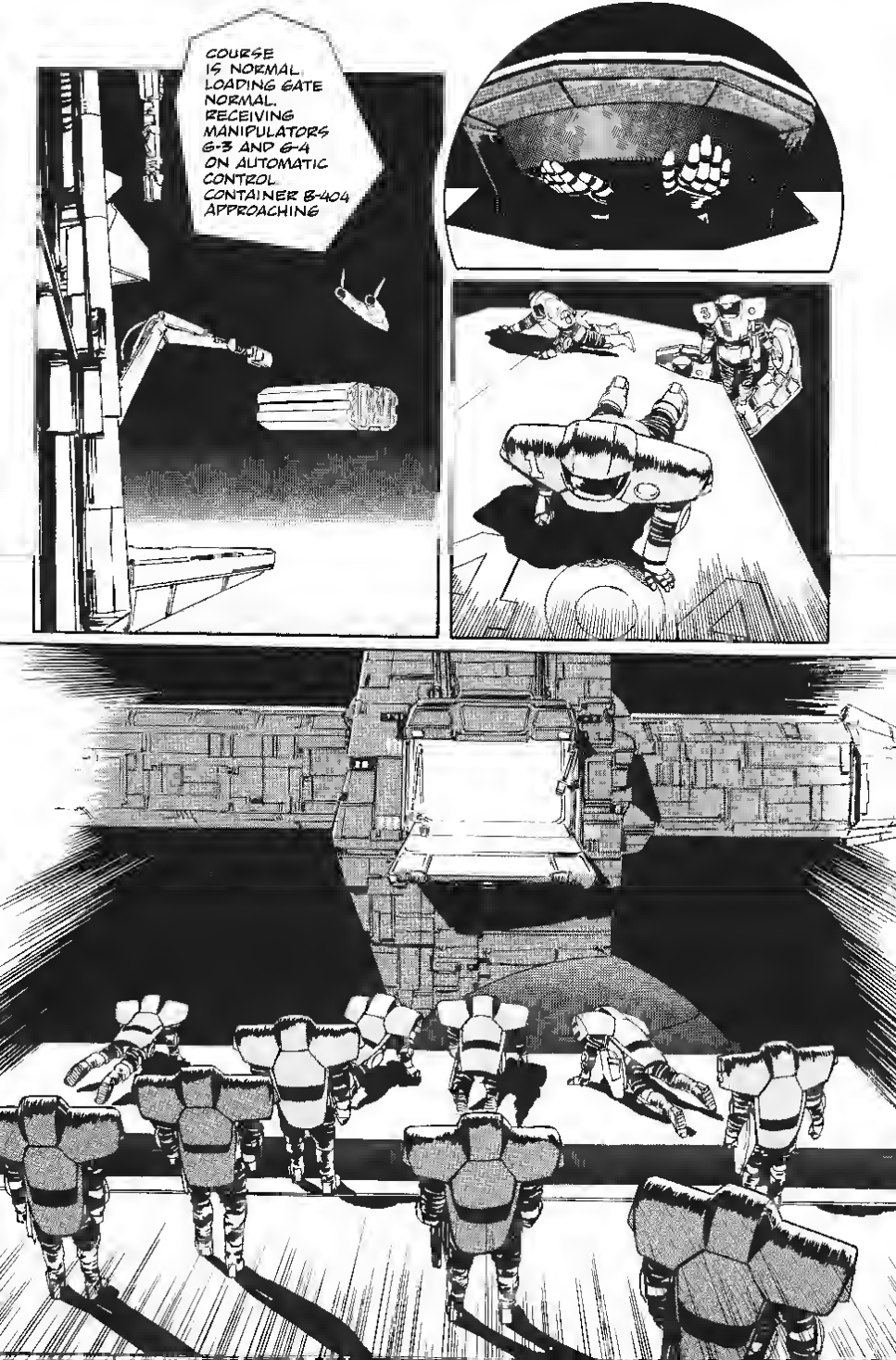
WILLIE, TODD! MAKE SURE YOU REPLACE THE MAIN NOZZLE!
IT'S GIVING OFF A VICIOUS RATTLE. IF WE DON'T FIX IT HERE, THERE'S NOT A CHANCE IN HELL WE'LL BE ABLE TO DODGE OUR WAY THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERE.
A-OKAY, CAPTAIN!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE CARBURETOR MYSELF.
THIS IS ALPHA CENTAURI'S SECOND PLANET, THE HORN.
AT FIRST IT LOOKS BARREN, LIKE AN ENDLESS, DEAD BEACH...
- IT WASN'T UNTIL 2020 THAT WE DECIDED TO DIG AROUND A BIT, AND DISCOVERED A TREASURE TROVE OF UNDERGROUND RESOURCES

ON THE FIRST TRIP, WE CARRIED A PROSPECTING ROBOT.
ON THE NEXT, A HUGE MINING PLANT.
AND NOW, ON THE THIRD TRIP, WE'VE FINALLY BEEN ABLE TO BRING HOME OUR FIRST YIELD.
NINE TONS OF LIQUID HYDROGEN..
AMAZING. THIS ALONE IS PROBABLY ENOUGH TO FURNISH ALL THE ELECTRICITY THE EARTH NEEDS FOR TEN YEARS.
AND I'LL BE BRINGING BACK A LOT MORE! HERE YOU GO! A TOAST TO OUR REUNION..
CONGRATULATIONS.
YOU CHOSE THIS WORK, YOU CHASED THIS DREAM. I'M GLAD TO SEE IT PAY OFF FOR YOU.

FIFTEEN YEARS...
RIGHT!
THIS IS THE MINING SITE ON HORN IS IT?
HOW'S TOKIO DOING? I GUESS HE'S REALLY GROWN, HASN'T HE? THAT CUTE LITTLE BOY...
HE DIED.
...HE--HE BECAME A SOLDIER. HE WAS KILLED FIVE YEARS AGO-- IN THE AFRICAN WAR...

IT'S TOO LATE, MARIA. STOP TRYING.
I THOUGHT YOU'D MANAGED TO LEAVE ME, MY SON, AND ALL THOSE OTHER THINGS BEHIND A LONG TIME AGO. ALL THE THINGS THAT STOOD IN THE WAY OF SPACE..
LAST YEAR MY WIFE DIED, TOO, SO HERE I AM--- ALL ALONE AGAIN.
THAT'S WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON HERE. NOTHING NEW...
HAVE YOU FINALLY COME TO HATE ME, DAN?
I'M A CRUEL WOMAN, AREN'T I?
NO.
NO... YOU'RE NOT THE CRUEL ONE. I AM.
BUT HAVEN'T YOU GOT A RESPONSIBILITY TO FACE UP TO LIFE'S CRUELTY?
CHIEF! THE SHUTTLE CARRYING THAT SPECIAL RUSH JOB IS APPROACHING. PLEASE COME TO THE CONTROL ROOM!

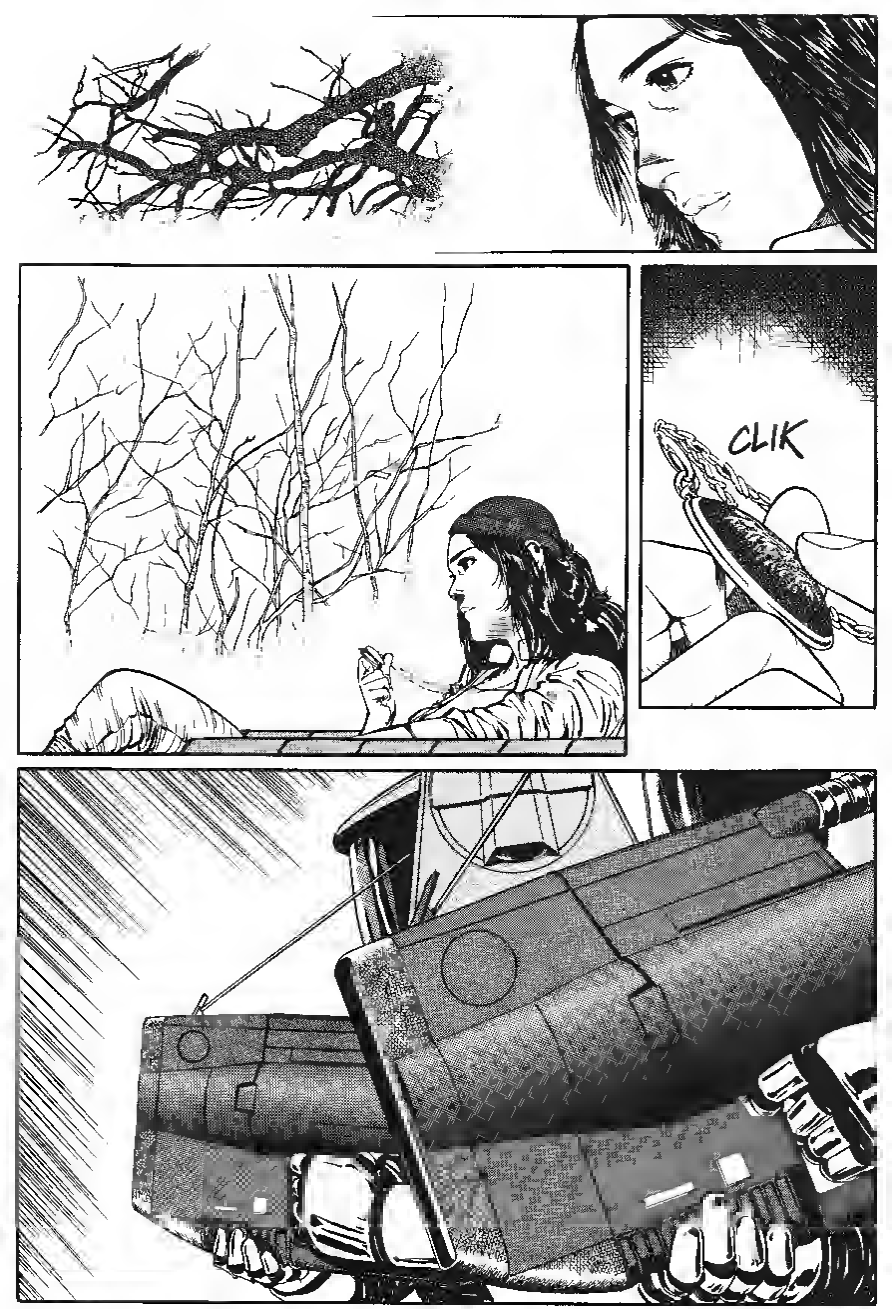

SHUTTLE APPROACHING OPEN LOADING GATE! STAND BY TO RECEIVE CONTAINER B-404!

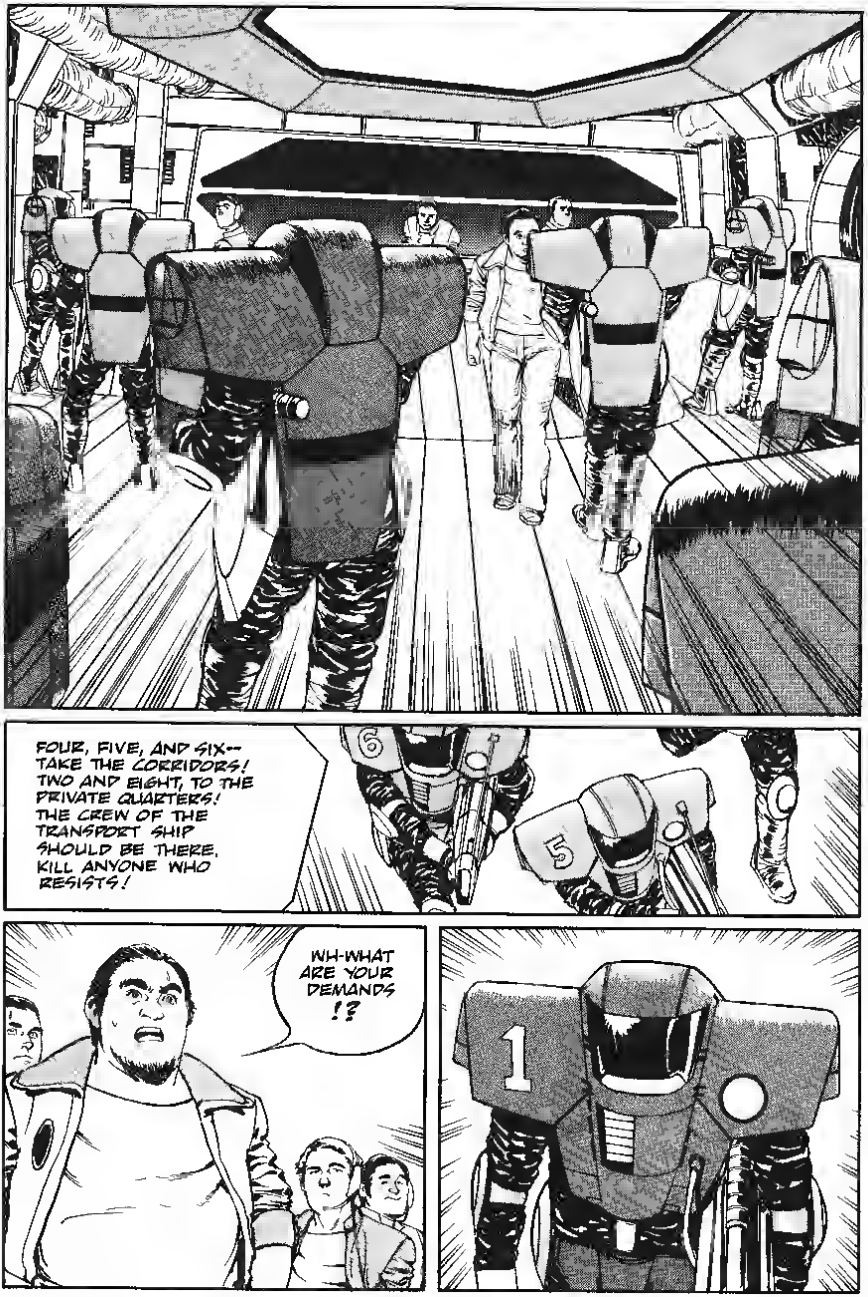

COURSE IS NORMAL. LOADING GATE NORMAL. RECEIVING MANIPULATORS G-3 AND G-4 ON AUTOMATIC CONTROL. CONTAINER B-404 APPROACHING

WILLIE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE !?
HEH, HEH, HEH...
DID YOU FORGET, CAPTAIN? TONIGHT IT'S MY TURN. Heh, heh...
...MARIA.
CHOK!
WH-WHOA! HOLD IT!
GET OUT! I THOUGHT I ORDERED YOU TO REPLACE THE MAIN NOZZLE!
HEH... HEH, HEH! NOW, DON'T BE LIKE THAT. WHAT'S WRONG? WE ALWAYS...
SHUT UP! I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT NOW!
NOT HERE !!

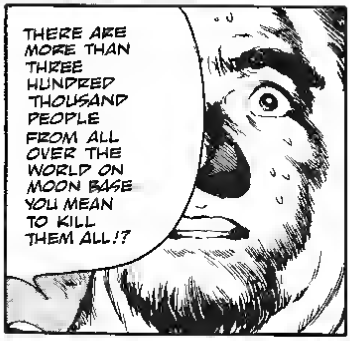
NOW GET LOST!
WHAM
SHSSHHT
D-DAMN IT!
HEY, YOU THERE-- WAIT UP A SEC.
WEREN'T YOU WITH THAT WOMAN EARLIER?
HEH, HEH-- DID YOU HAVE SOMETHING GOING WITH MARIA, TOO? HMM?

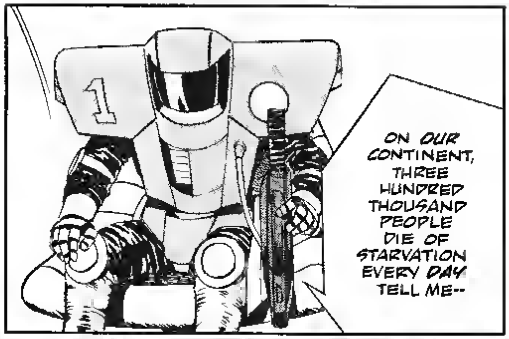
YOU DON'T HAVE TO HIDE IT, BROTHER. IN SPACE, PEOPLE TURN LONELY... MEN AND WOMEN HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO GET FRIENDLY.
HEH, HEH, HEH...
WANT TO KNOW SOMETHING? MARIA LIKES TO GET IT ON IN MIDAIR, WHEN THE SHIP IS WEIGHTLESS, AND--
KRAK
THUD


CLIK


FOUR, FIVE, AND SIX-- TAKE THE CORRIDORS! TWO AND EIGHT, TO THE PRIVATE QUARTERS! THE CREW OF THE TRANSPORT SHIP SHOULD BE THERE. KILL ANYONE WHO RESISTS!
6
5
WH-WHAT ARE YOUR DEMANDS !?
1

WHDWHDWHDWHD
SHOSH
D-DAN!?
SOMETHING'S WRONG. MEN IN ARMOR--HEADED THIS WAY. LOCK THE DOOR!
I'LL TRY CALLING THE CONTROL ROOM. WHAT IN HELL COULD.!?
TH-THE LIQUID HYDROGEN!?
PUT A TON OF LIQUID HYDROGEN INTO A CONTAINER--
--AND FIRE IT AT MOON BASE!?
chik

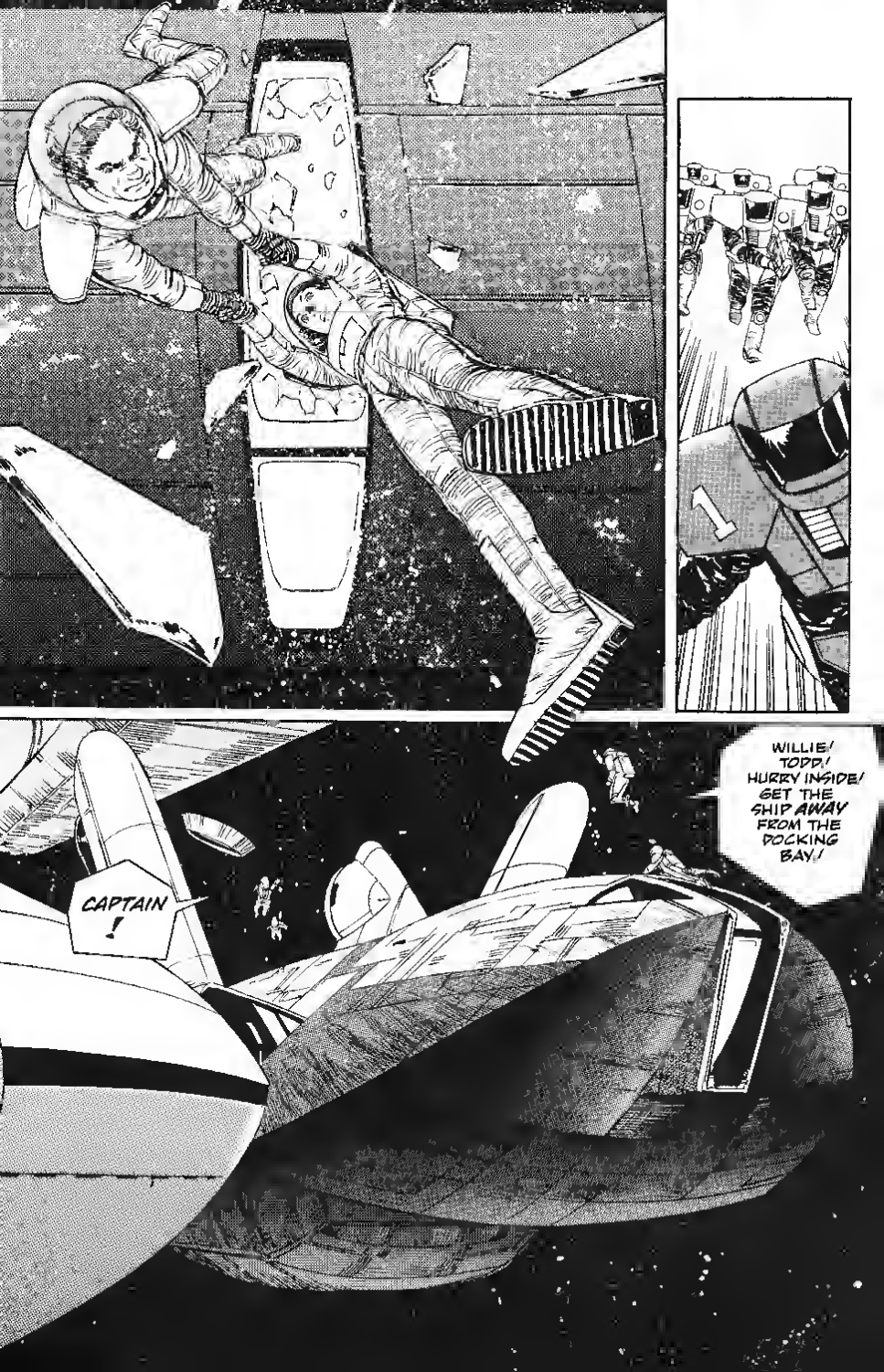

THERE ARE MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD ON MOON BASE YOU MEAN TO KILL THEM ALL!?

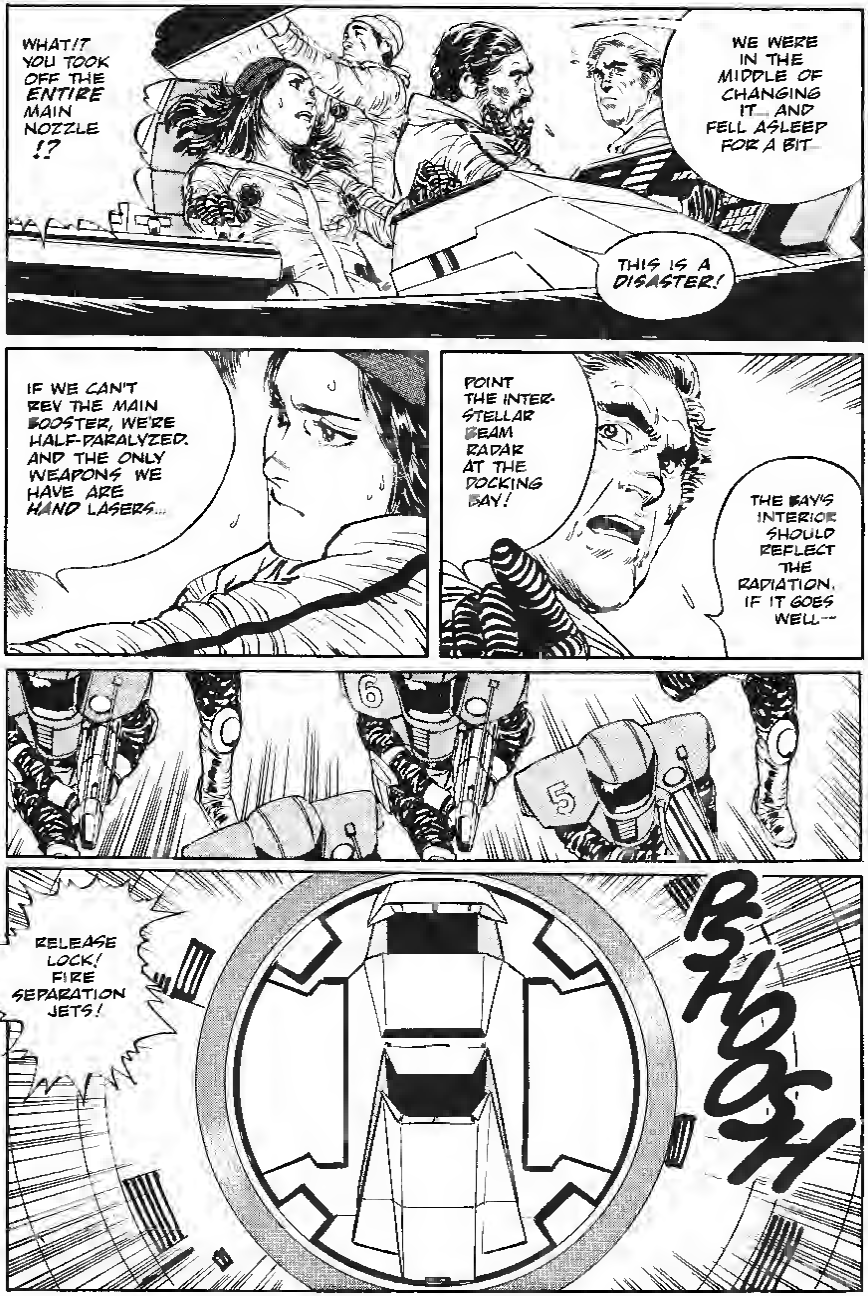

1
ON OUR CONTINENT, THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE DIE OF STARVATION EVERY DAY TELL ME--

-WHY DON'T YOU SEND OUR CONTINENT THE FOOD AND GOODS YOU SEND TO THE MOON? THAT WAS THE POINT OF OUR POLITICAL UPRISING.
WE MAY HAVE BEEN DEFEATED IN THE AFRICAN WAR, BUT WE WILL GET OUR MESSAGE ACROSS--BY FORCE IF NECESSARY!

A WISE MASAI ONCE SAID, "THE SHARPENED BONES OF FALLEN HEROES WAIT PATIENTLY FOR THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE ENEMY..."
WE'LL TAKE THE REMAINING LIQUID HYDROGEN WITH US-- FUEL AT LAST TO CONTINUE OUR WAR EFFORT.
MY HYDROGEN STAYS! I DIDN'T BRING IT THIS FAR TO HELP A BUNCH OF PIRATES DESTROY THE MOON!
THE MOON IS EQUIPPED WITH A DEFENSE SYSTEM...
...BUT EVEN IF THEY MANAGED TO EXPLODE IT TEN THOUSAND KILOMETERS AWAY, THE TREMENDOUS FORCE OF THE LIQUID HYDROGEN BLAST WOULD CAUSE HOPELESS DAMAGE TO MOON BASE...!
BAM
BAM
BAM
THEY'LL BE PATROLLING THE CORRIDORS! DAN! BRING OUT THE EMERGENCY SUITS!

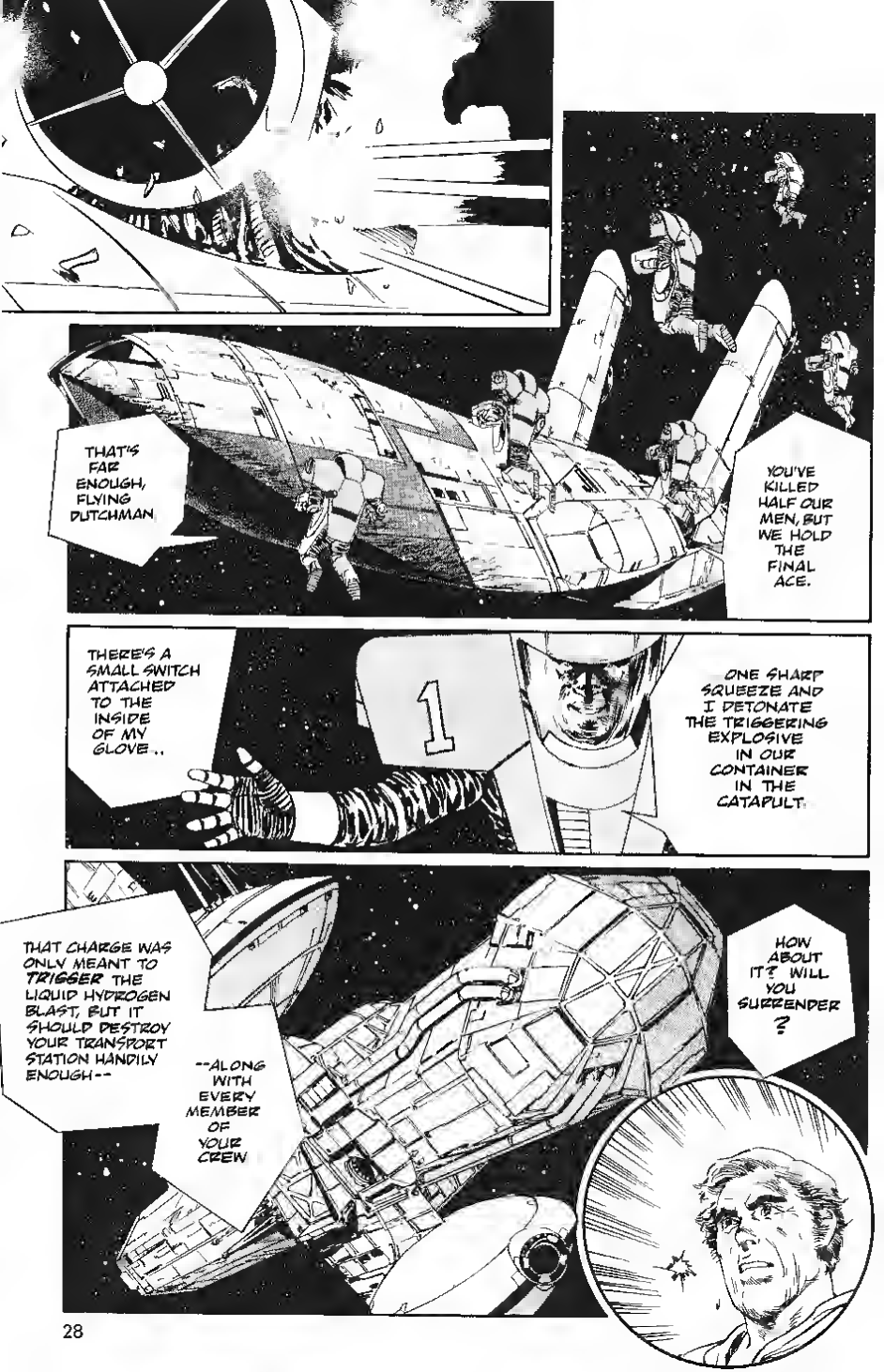
YOU BASTARD! YOU WERE DIRECTING OUR CONVERSATION SOMEWHERE ELSE, WEREN'T YOU!? WE CAN'T AFFORD FURTHER IDLENESS.
1
THREE, YOU STAY HERE AND WATCH THESE GUYS! THE REST OF YOU, COME WITH ME-- TO THE DOCKING BAY!
OPEN UP, DAMN YOU!
BAM BAM
MOVE! I'LL LASER SNAP THAT DOOR TO SHREDS!
DANGER
bip bip bip
W-WAIT! DON'T OPEN IT!
IT'S THE PRESSURE LOSS SIGNAL! THE AIR PRESSURE IN THE ROOM IS DROPPING SUDDENLY!
THEY BROKE THE WINDOW!

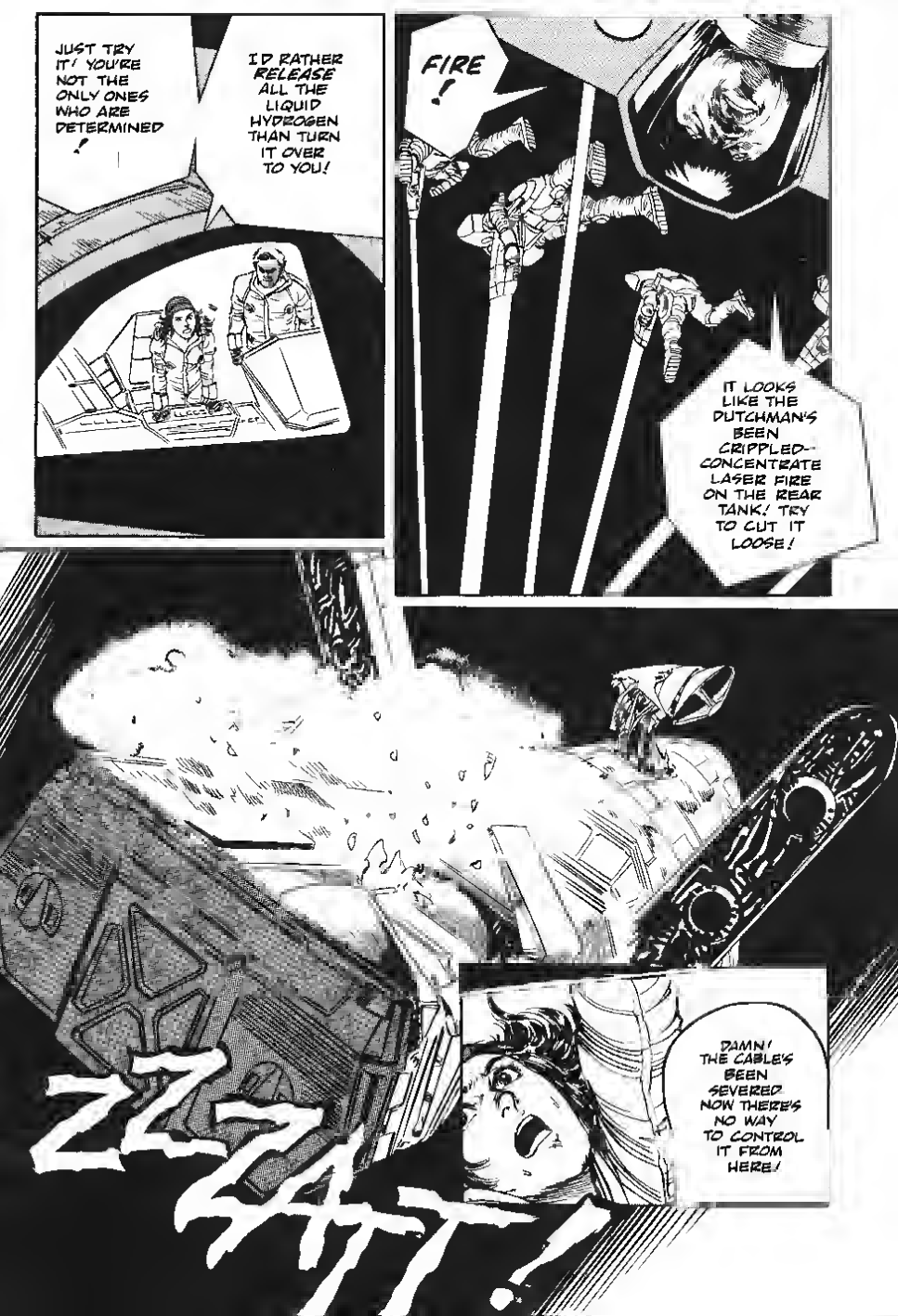

CAPTAIN !
WILLIE! TODD! HURRY INSIDE! GET THE SHIP AWAY FROM THE DOCKING BAY!


WHAT!? YOU TOOK OFF THE ENTIRE MAIN NOZZLE !?
WE WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF CHANGING IT... AND FELL ASLEEP FOR A BIT--
THIS IS A DISASTER!
IF WE CAN'T REV THE MAIN BOOSTER, WE'RE HALF-PARALYZED. AND THE ONLY WEAPONS WE HAVE ARE HAND LASERS...
POINT THE INTER-STELLAR BEAM RADAR AT THE DOCKING BAY!
THE BAY'S INTERIOR SHOULD REFLECT THE RADIATION, IF IT GOES WELL--
RELEASE LOCK! FIRE SEPARATION JETS!
SHOOSH

SHOOO
6
7
FULL POWER TO BEAM RADAR!

YAAGHH!
EEYAGH!
HO, HOOOO! CHECK IT OUT!
THEY'RE BEING ROASTED-- JUST LIKE POODLES IN A MICROWAVE! Heh, heh!


THAT'S FAR ENOUGH, FLYING DUTCHMAN.
YOU'VE KILLED HALF OUR MEN, BUT WE HOLD THE FINAL ACE.
1
THERE'S A SMALL SWITCH ATTACHED TO THE INSIDE OF MY GLOVE..
ONE SHARP SQUEEZE AND I DETONATE THE TRIGGERING EXPLOSIVE IN OUR CONTAINER IN THE CATAPULT.
THAT CHARGE WAS ONLY MEANT TO TRIGGER THE LIQUID HYDROGEN BLAST, BUT IT SHOULD DESTROY YOUR TRANSPORT STATION HANDILY ENOUGH--
--ALONG WITH EVERY MEMBER OF YOUR CREW
HOW ABOUT IT? WILL YOU SURRENDER?


JUST TRY IT! YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO ARE DETERMINED!
I'D RATHER RELEASE ALL THE LIQUID HYDROGEN THAN TURN IT OVER TO YOU!
FIRE!
IT LOOKS LIKE THE DUTCHMAN'S BEEN CRIPPLED--CONCENTRATE LASER FIRE ON THE REAR TANK! TRY TO CUT IT LOOSE!
DAMN! THE CABLE'S BEEN SEVERED! NOW THERE'S NO WAY TO CONTROL IT FROM HERE!
ZZZAT!

MARIA, HOWZABOUT A KISS? FOR GOOD LUCK...
THE WAY THINGS STAND NOW, WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT OUTSIDE, RIGHT?
AW, I LOVE YOU BOTH OF YOU...!
I GUESS I HAVE THE RIGHT TO COME ALONG...
NOT YOU, DAN! STAY HERE.
YOUR FIRST RESPONSIBILITY IS THE LIVES OF YOUR PEOPLE-- THE ONES BEING HELD HOSTAGE, RIGHT?
BESIDES, WE'VE ONLY GOT THREE HAND LASERS.
ARE YOU SAYING THE THREE OF YOU ARE GOING TO STOP THIS ATTACK ALONE?

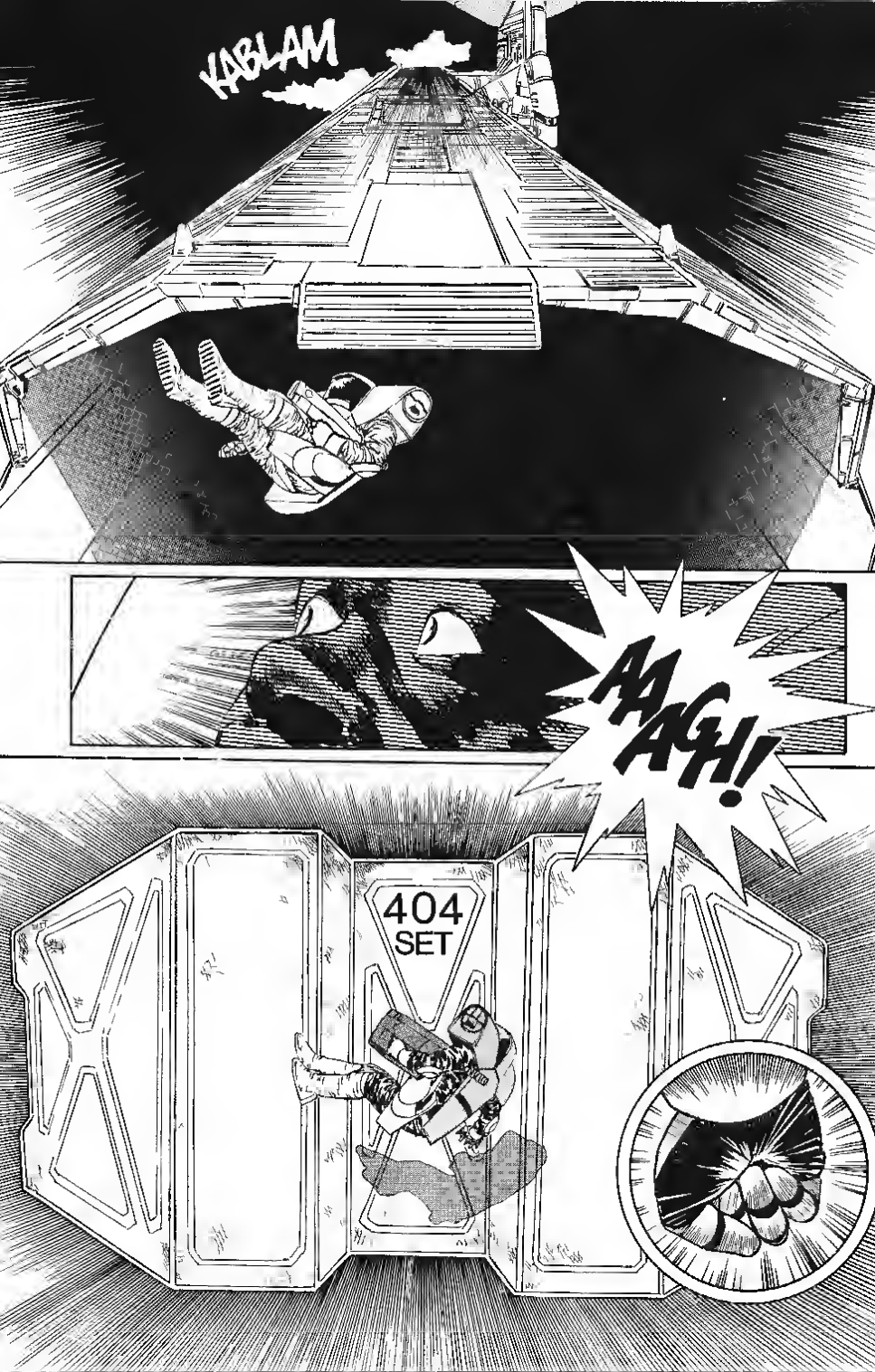
I LOVE YOU, DAN. I REALLY DO.
WE'VE GOT TO PROTECT THAT HYDROGEN! WE SPENT AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF TIME BRINGING IT THIS FAR!
AND IT WASN'T JUST ANY KIND OF TIME...
...I PAID FOR THAT TIME BY BETRAYING THOSE I CARED MOST ABOUT! I CAN'T LET THAT SACRIFICE GO UP IN FLAMES... I CAN'T!

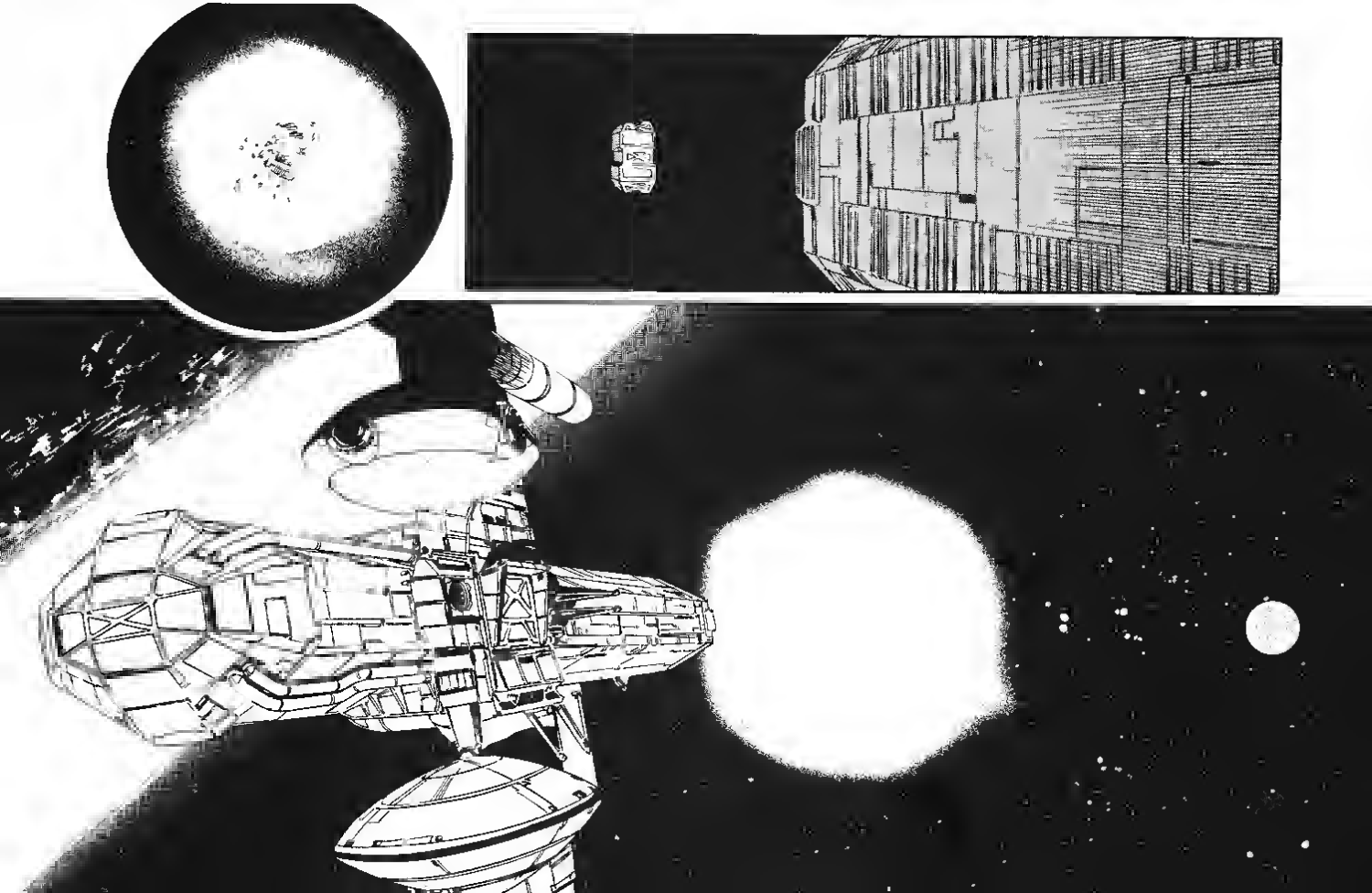
HEY! YOU THINK WE'RE GOING TO LET YOU JUST WALTZ OFF WITH THIS HYDROGEN AFTER WE STRUGGLED SO HARD TO GET IT HERE!?
CHIEF! CHIEF! THIS IS CONTROL!
WE OVERPOWERED THE GUY LEFT ON GUARD HERE! WHAT'S YOUR SITUATION?
THAT CONTAINER OF THEIRS IS FULL OF EXPLOSIVES LOAD THE CATAPULT WITH FIRING CHARGE AND SHOOT IT OFF IMMEDIATELY!
IT'S DANGEROUS!

WILLIE !
MA... MARIA.
TONIGHT.. WAS MY. NIGHT..
DAMN YOU !!
10
FREEZE !

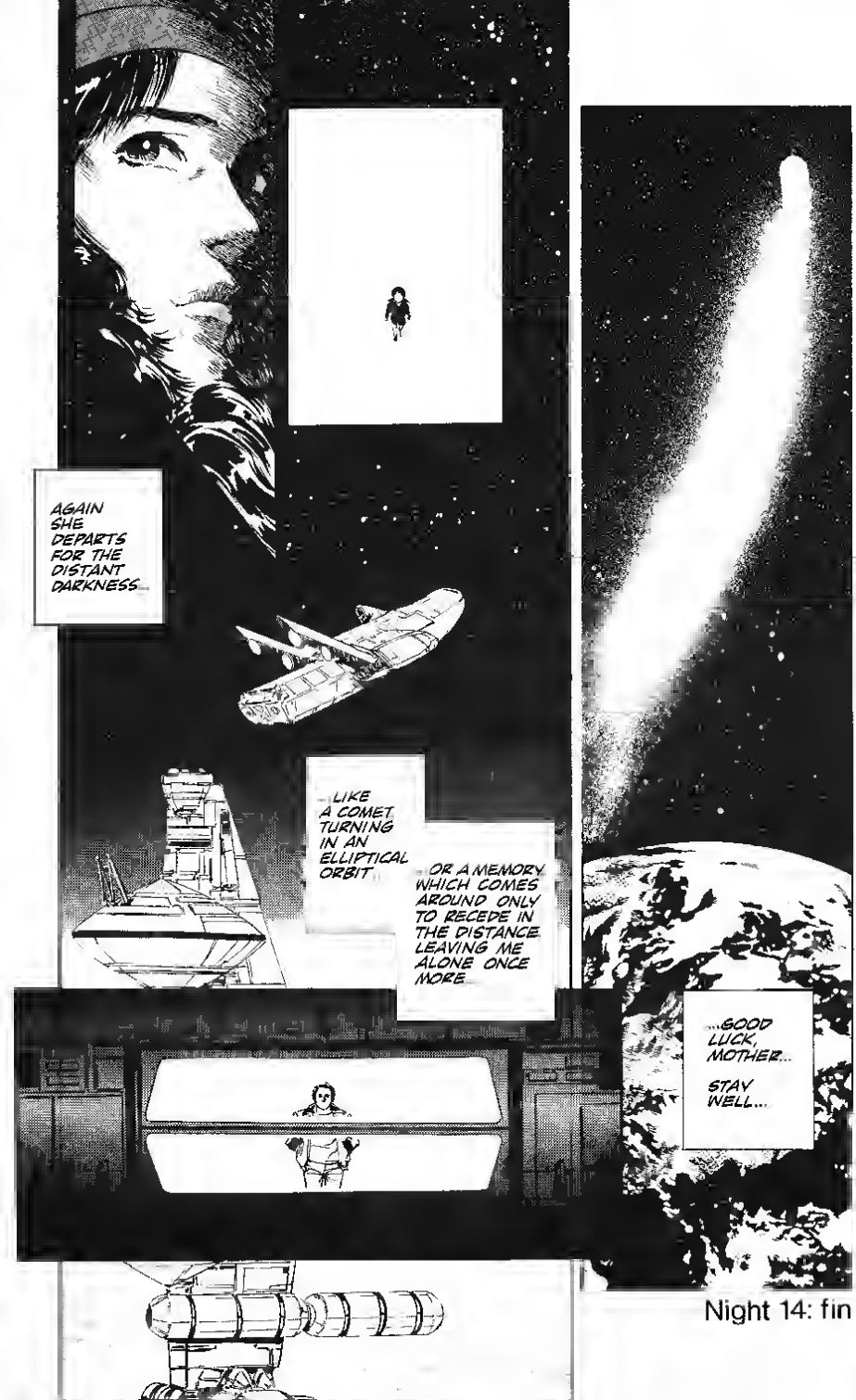
YOU FREEZE. THIS VALVE RELEASES THE HYDROGEN!
THAT'S A LIE.
THAT'S JUST A COOLANT PRESSURE VALVE.
N-NO! DAN! STAY AWAY!!
BABY, NO!

FWSHH
WHAAA!
CHIEF! LOADING OF FIRING CHARGE COMPLETE! CATAPULTING THE CONTAINER!


KABLAM
AAAGH!
404
SET



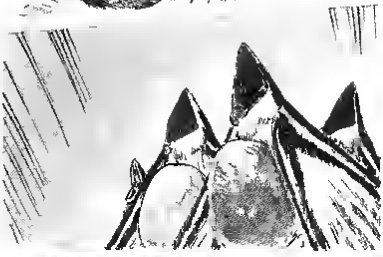
SO ANOTHER FIFTEEN YEARS EH..?
YES. AND THIRTEEN OF THOSE WILL BE SPENT IN A HIBERNATION CAPSULE.
JUST LIKE ALWAYS, I'LL ONLY AGE ANOTHER TWO YEARS.
THREE TRIPS OF FIFTEEN YEARS EACH FORTY-FIVE YEARS ALL TOGETHER.
YOU ARE A CRUEL WOMAN.
GOOD LUCK...
STAY ALIVE...
...BABY...
GOOD LUCK...

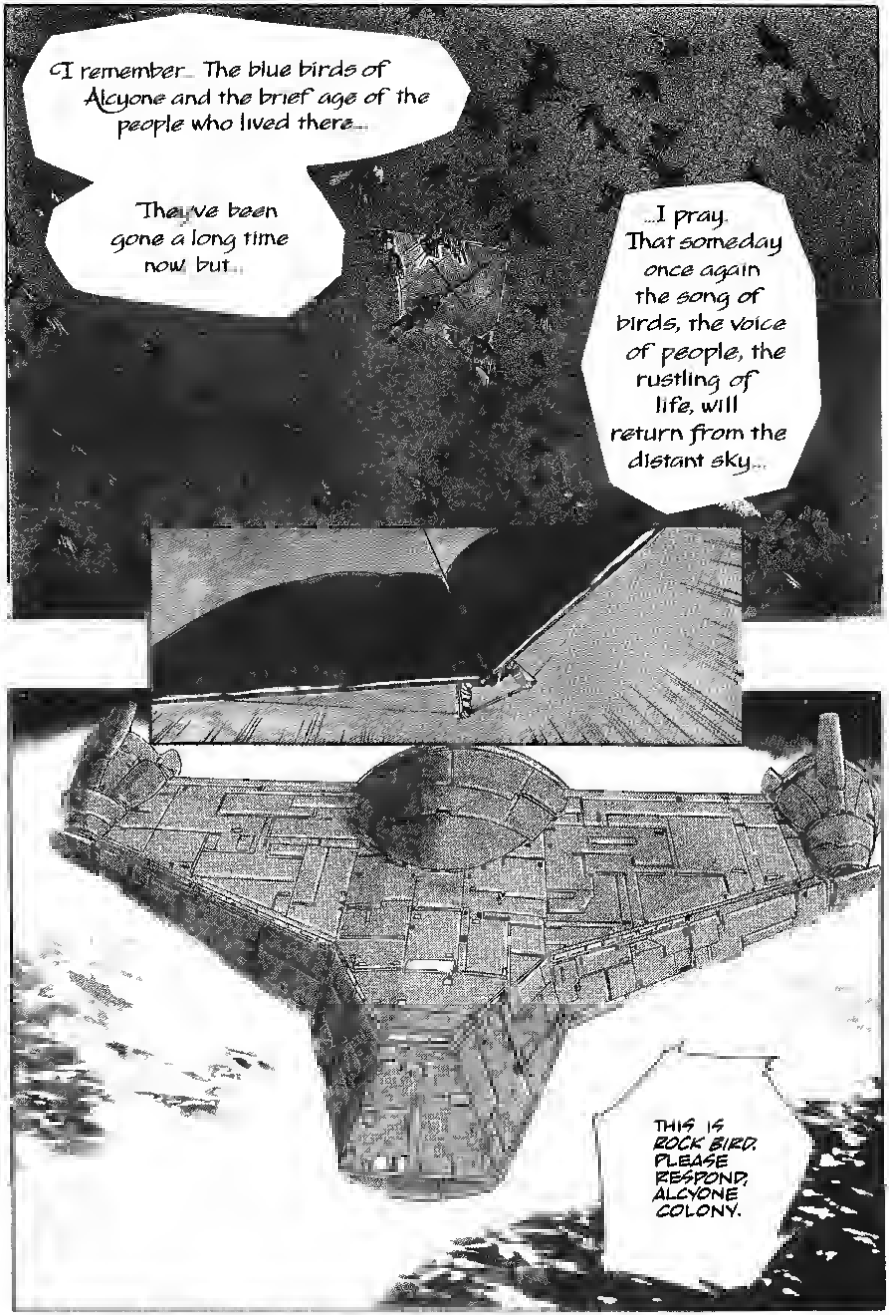

AGAIN SHE DEPARTS FOR THE DISTANT DARKNESS...
...LIKE A COMET TURNING IN AN ELLIPTICAL ORBIT...
...OR A MEMORY WHICH COMES AROUND ONLY TO RECEDE IN THE DISTANCE, LEAVING ME ALONE ONCE MORE...
...GOOD LUCK, MOTHER...
STAY WELL...

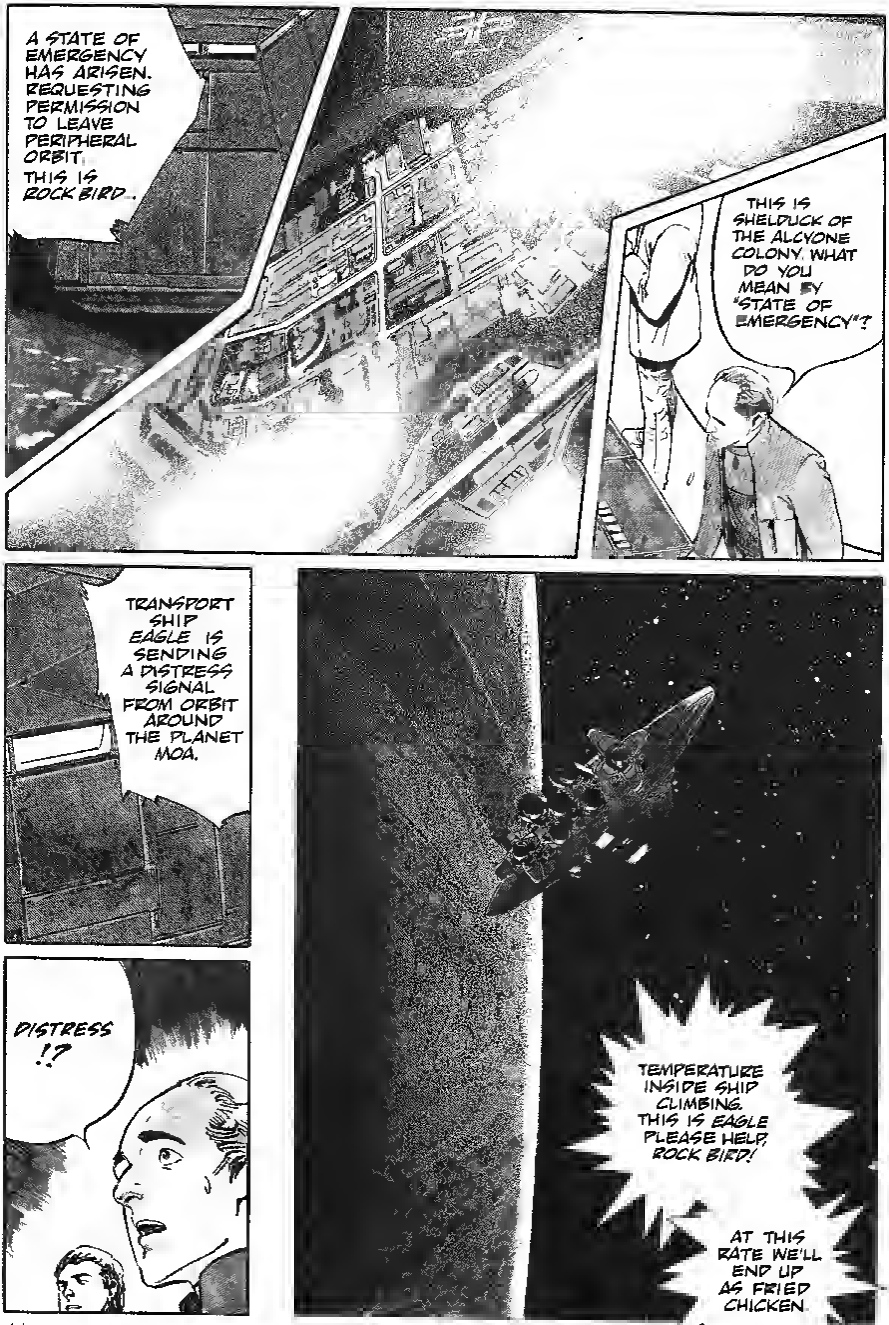
Night 14: fin

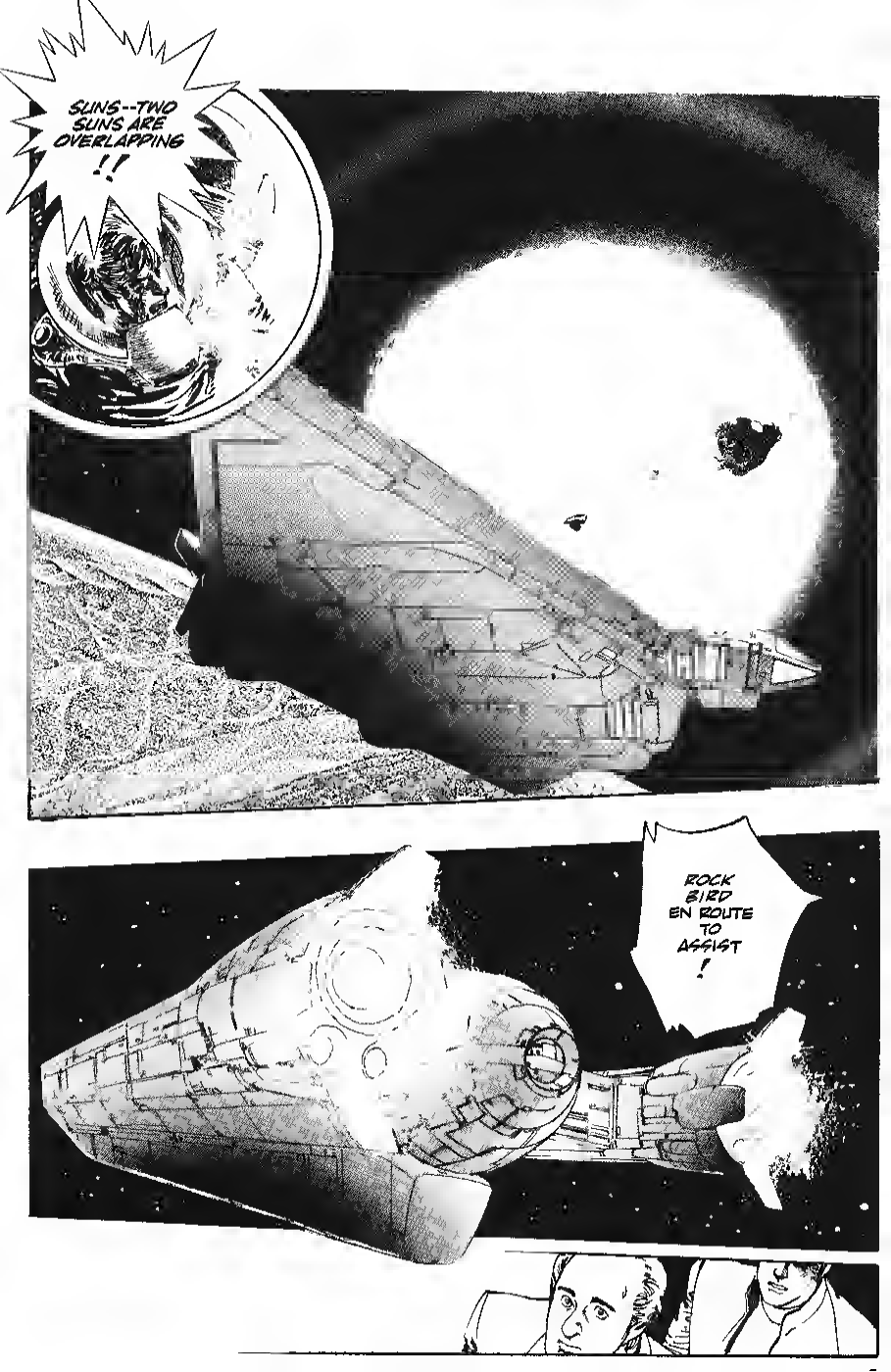
Night 15:

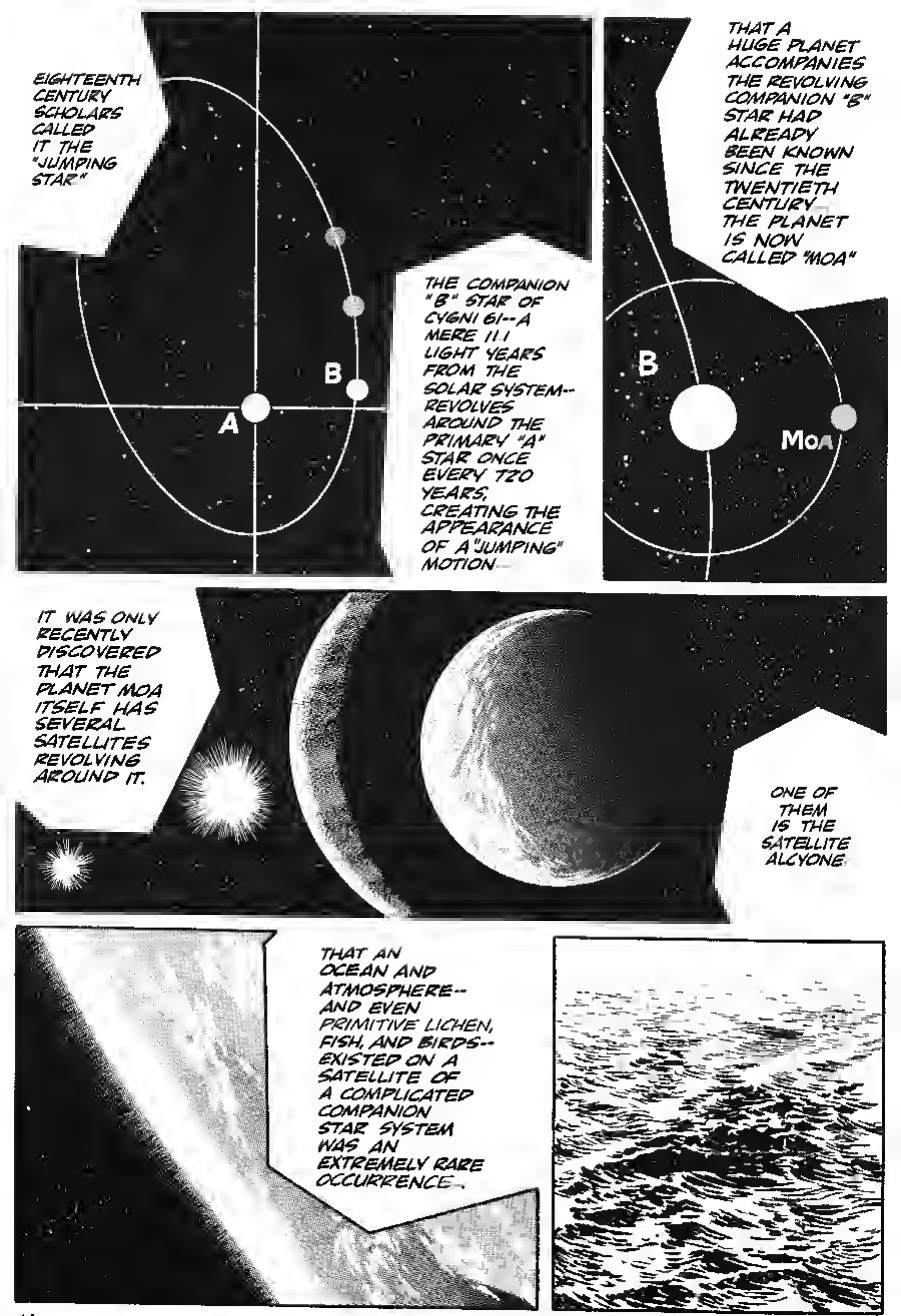
An Hour's Song in a Birdless Sky



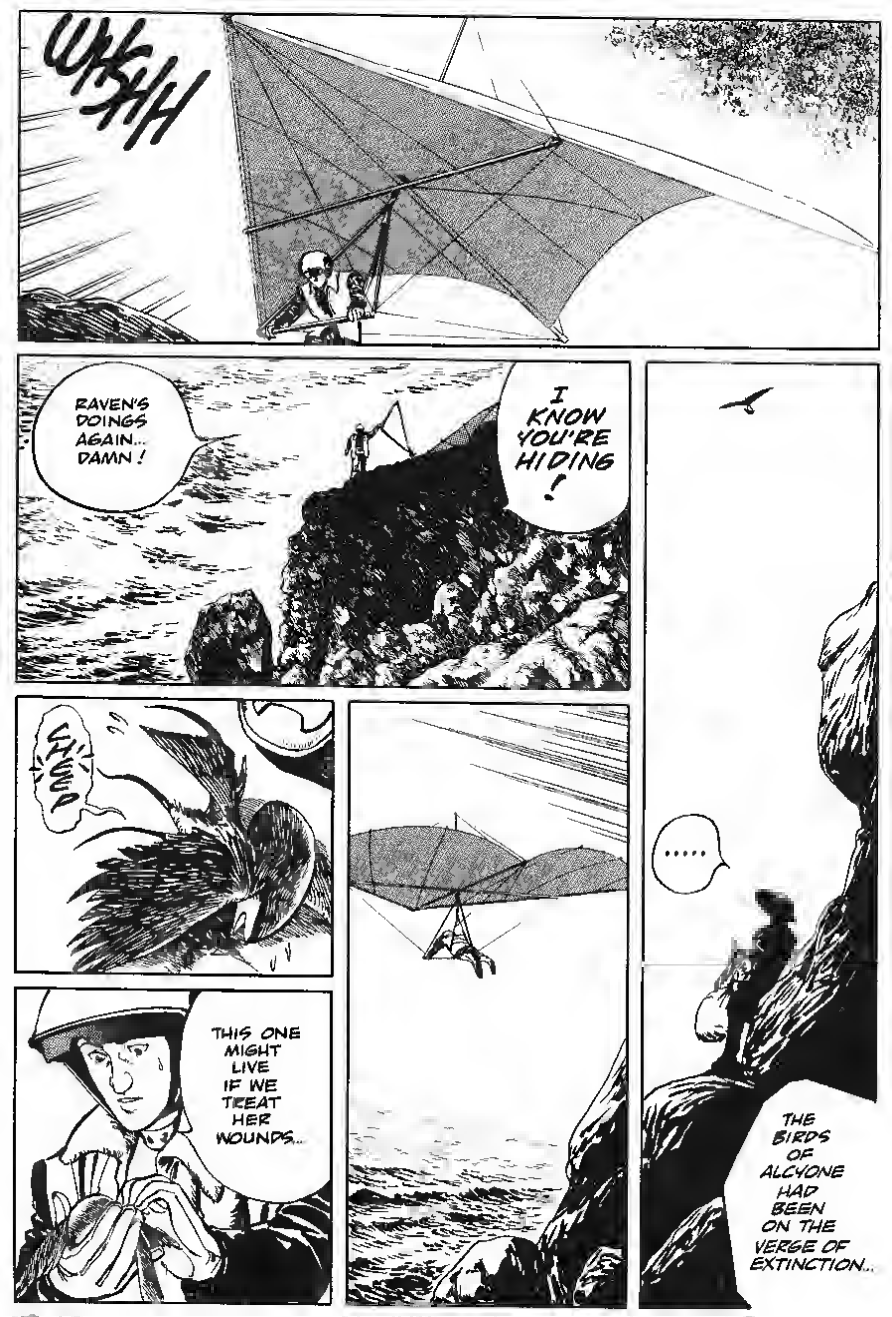

I remember... The blue birds of Alcyone and the brief age of the people who lived there...
That've been gone a long time now, but...
...I pray. That someday once again the song of birds, the voice of people, the rustling of life, will return from the distant sky...
THIS IS ROCK BIRD. PLEASE RESPOND, ALCYONE COLONY.


A STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS ARISEN. REQUESTING PERMISSION TO LEAVE PERIPHERAL ORBIT. THIS IS ROCK BIRD..
THIS IS SHELDUCK OF THE ALCYONE COLONY. WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "STATE OF EMERGENCY"?
TRANSPORT SHIP EAGLE IS SENDING A DISTRESS SIGNAL FROM ORBIT AROUND THE PLANET MOA.
DISTRESS !?
TEMPERATURE INSIDE SHIP CLIMBING. THIS IS EAGLE PLEASE HELP, ROCK BIRD!
AT THIS RATE WE'LL END UP AS FRIED CHICKEN.


SUNS--TWO SUNS ARE OVERLAPPING !!
ROCK BIRD EN ROUTE TO ASSIST !

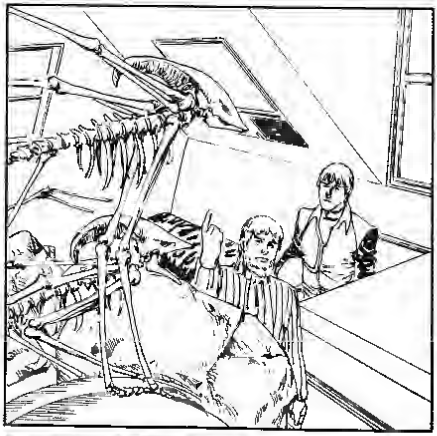

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SCHOLARS CALLED IT THE "JUMPING STAR."
A
B
THE COMPANION "B" STAR OF CYGNI 61--A MERE 11.1 LIGHT YEARS FROM THE SOLAR SYSTEM--REVOLVES AROUND THE PRIMARY "A" STAR ONCE EVERY 720 YEARS, CREATING THE APPEARANCE OF A "JUMPING" MOTION.
THAT A HUGE PLANET ACCOMPANIES THE REVOLVING COMPANION "B" STAR HAD ALREADY BEEN KNOWN SINCE THE TWENTIETH CENTURY--THE PLANET IS NOW CALLED "MOA"
B
MOA
IT WAS ONLY RECENTLY DISCOVERED THAT THE PLANET MOA ITSELF HAS SEVERAL SATELLITES REVOLVING AROUND IT.
ONE OF THEM IS THE SATELLITE ALCYONE.
THAT AN OCEAN AND ATMOSPHERE--AND EVEN PRIMITIVE LICHEN, FISH, AND BIRDS--EXISTED ON A SATELLITE OF A COMPLICATED COMPANION STAR SYSTEM WAS AN EXTREMELY RARE OCCURRENCE.

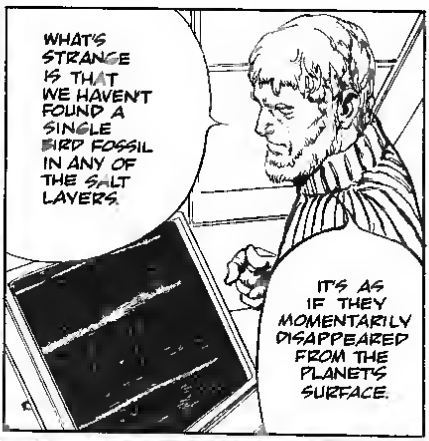
BLAM
BLAM
CAW
CAW!
CHEEP
.....
TWEEP

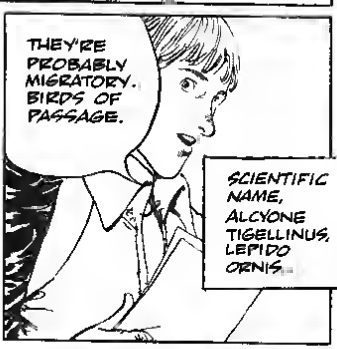

WHSHH
I KNOW YOU'RE HIDING!
RAVEN'S DOINGS AGAIN... DAMN!
.....
THE BIRDS OF ALCYONE HAD BEEN ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION..
CHEEP
THIS ONE MIGHT LIVE IF WE TEEAT HER WOUNDS...

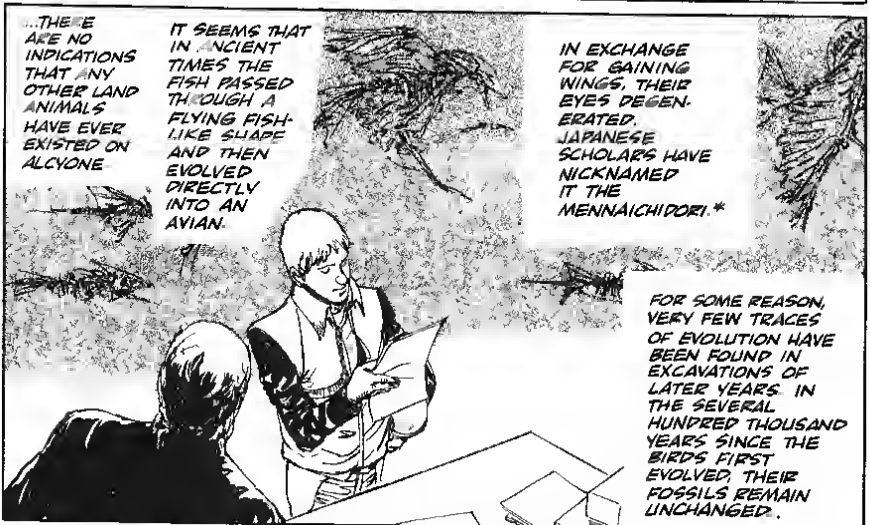
THE EARLY COLONISTS RECKLESSLY HUNTED THEM IN LARGE QUANTITIES AS A SOURCE OF FOOD.
WHEN THE BIRDS HAD BEEN REDUCED TO ONLY A THOUSAND IN NUMBER, THE COLONY HURRIEDLY BEGAN TO PROTECT THEM...
WELL, THIS ONE CERTAINLY HAS RECOVERED WELL.
CHIRUP
fpfp fp
SHE'LL BE FINE, NOW THANKS, ROBIN--IT'S BECAUSE YOU WORKED SO HARD TAKING CARE OF HER..
SHE LOST HER MOTHER, TOO, DIDN'T SHE? I FEEL SORRY FOR HER..
CHIRUP

HE'S A FINE BOY, THAT ROBIN...
SUPERINTENDENT OF PROTECTED BIRDS MUST BE A HARD JOB, SEAGULL
IT'S THE POACHERS. IT SEEMS THAT EVERY TIME I GO ON MY ROUNDS, THE BIRDS' NUMBERS HAVE DECREASED
BUT I HAVE MY JOB. WHY ARE YOU THIS FAR NORTH, PROFESSOR TIGELLINUS? IT'S SO MUCH WARMER IN THE EQUATORIAL AREAS WHERE THE COLONIES ARE...
I HAVE MY JOB, TOO WE'VE GOT A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT THIS PLANET-- DON'T YOU AGREE?
THIS PARTICULAR AREA IS IDEAL FOR STUDYING ALCYONE'S GEOLOGICAL PERIODS
LOOK UP HERE THE WHITISH AREA IS A LAYER OF SALT..
...IT'S PROBABLE THAT THE OCEAN DRIED UP SUDDENLY, LEAVING ONLY SALT BEHIND
AN OCEAN CAN DO THAT..?
HAPPENS ABOUT ONCE EVERY TEN THOUSAND YEARS ON ALCYONE.




WHAT'S STRANGE IS THAT WE HAVENT FOUND A SINGLE BIRD FOSSIL IN ANY OF THE SALT LAYERS.
IT'S AS IF THEY MOMENTARILY DISAPPEARED FROM THE PLANET'S SURFACE.




...THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT ANY OTHER LAND ANIMALS HAVE EVER EXISTED ON ALCYONE.
IT SEEMS THAT IN ANCIENT TIMES THE FISH PASSED THROUGH A FLYING FISH-LIKE SHAPE AND THEN EVOLVED DIRECTLY INTO AN AVIAN.
IN EXCHANGE FOR GAINING WINGS, THEIR EYES DEGENERATED. JAPANESE SCHOLARS HAVE NICKNAMED IT THE MENNAICHIDORI.*
FOR SOME REASON, VERY FEW TRACES OF EVOLUTION HAVE BEEN FOUND IN EXCAVATIONS OF LATER YEARS. IN THE SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND YEARS SINCE THE BIRDS FIRST EVOLVED, THEIR FOSSILS REMAIN UNCHANGED.

*"MENNAICHIDORI" LITERALLY MEANS "EYELESS PLOVER," AND IS THE NICKNAME OF A KIND OF COASTAL BIRD COMMON IN JAPAN WHOSE EYES ARE HIDDEN BY EYELASH-LIKE FEATHERS

TWIRRUP?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO THE COLONY, I CAN FLY YOU THERE IN MY PLANE, PROFESSOR
THIS TIME, I'VE JUST GOT TO CATCH THAT RAVEN UP TO SOMETHING.
THAT'S RIGHT, PROFESSOR SHELDUCK. I'M ON MY WAY TO THE COLONY NOW.
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO ASK YOU AS AN ASTRONOMER.
ROBIN, KEEP AN EYE ON THINGS WHILE I'M GONE. OH, AND YES.. COME HERE A MOMENT.
THAT'S A CAVE I HOLLOWED OUT WHEN I WAS EXCAVATING FOSSILS
SEE. THERE'S ENOUGH FOOD AND DAILY NECESSITIES TO HOLD OUT FOR A WHILE.
WOW, DAD! IT'S LIKE AN AUK'S NEST!

A PRECAUTION IN CASE SOMETHING HAPPENS. I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW.
NOW, THEN, SO LONG.
VRRSSHH
CHEEP
MR. SEAGULL SAYS I CAN TAKE CARE OF YOU UNTIL YOU GROW UP! ISN'T THAT GREAT...?
HOW DID... ?
CHEEP

THE HEAD OF THE ALCYONE TIGELLINUS-- IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE FOREHEAD ACTS AS A KIND OF INFRARED SENSOR IN PLACE OF EYES, AND CAN DETECT CHANGES IN TEMPERATURE WITH EXTREME SENSITIVITY.
ALSO, THE STRANGELY ELONGATED OCCIPUT FUNCTIONS AS A RUDDER, AS WITH THE PTEROSAUR, BUT INSIDE THERE IS A PORTION OF THE BRAIN THAT IS ENLARGED AND DEVELOPED. IT IS NOT KNOWN TO WHAT FUNCTION THIS SECTION IS RELATED...
FINCH !
FINCH, ARE YOU HERE !?

I'LL GET TEN THOUSAND EASY-- THAT'S A STEAL FOR TODAY'S CATCH
I'M SURE FINCH WILL BE HAPPY WHEN HE SEES THIS
TZEEEP
INSTANTANEOUS STASIS... VERY CLEVER.
WHO!?
S- SUPERINTENDENT SEAGULL!

QUITE A SURPRISE
DO YOU INTEND TO WIPE EVERY BIRD OFF THIS PLANET, RAVEN ?
...YOU WERE PLANNING TO SMUGGLE ALL THESE TO EARTH FOR A PROFIT, WEREN'T YOU !?
WIPE-- ?
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH ! I COULDN'T DO THAT NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRIED.
THE BIRDS ARE MOVING TO SOME OTHER PLACE.
THAT'S WHY THEIR NUMBERS ARE DECREASING.
DON'T GIVE ME THAT !!
LISTEN! I'VE SEEN WILD BIRDS BECOME EXTINCT ON EARTH TIME AND TIME AGAIN!

I WON'T LET THE SAME THING HAPPEN ON ALCYONE!
NOT JUST BIRDS, BUT ANY LIVING THING! ONCE THEY DISAPPEAR, THEY'RE GONE FOREVER!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND!?
.....
I'LL HAVE PROFESSOR TIGELLINUS CONFISCATE ALL THESE BIRDS..
IF I CATCH YOU AT IT AGAIN, I'LL HAVE YOU DEPORTED BACK TO EARTH REMEMBER THAT!!
WHY ARE YOU LETTING ME GO..?
WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER A LONG TIME, RAVEN... THAT'S ALL

ONCE, SPACE WAS THE EXCLUSIVE DOMAIN OF ELITE SCIENTISTS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL—
...BUT WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLONIES BY ROBOTS, PEOPLE AS VARIED AS THE COLORFUL BIRDS OF THE JUNGLE THRONGED TO SPACE AND MINGLED...
FINCH!
W-WHAT? RAVEN, YOU'RE BACK...?

THEY'RE BIRDS! I BET YOU CAN SELL THESE FOR A GOOD PRICE, FINCH!
THEY'RE PRETTY!
SURE, JUST LIKE I TOLD YOU, RIGHT?
DON'T TOUCH THEM WITH YOUR DIRTY HANDS!
FINCH! I'M NOT RISKING MY NECK JUST SO YOU CAN FOOL AROUND WITH THESE KIND OF WOMEN!
GET OUT, WHORES! NIGHTHAWK'S!
WHAP
IF YOU'VE GOT ANY COMPLAINTS, I'LL BE GLAD TO LEAVE, RAVEN.
BESIDES, I'M LIKE A SWALLOW. MAYBE IT'S JUST ABOUT MIGRATING SEASON.
...FINCH.

IT'S TRUE THAT THIS YEAR, GIA AND B ARE AT THEIR CLOSEST IN THE 720 YEAR CYCLE, BUT...
HOW WILL ALCYONE BE AFFECTED, PROFESSOR SHELDUCK ?
I'M DISTURBED BY THE PATTERN OF THE SALT LAYERS. COULD IT BE THAT...?
IT'S ONLY ENOUGH TO RAISE THE TEMPERATURE *SLIGHTLY*. DON'T WORRY, TIGELLINUS. THE ORBITAL CALCULATIONS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED
BEEP
WHAT!? AN URGENT REPORT FROM THE ROCK BIRD!?

WE'VE DISCOVERED THE CAUSE OF EAGLE'S EMERGENCY. THIS IS JUST A SIGN OF WHAT'S TO COME!
IT'S THE GRAVITY LENS EFFECT! ALCYONE IS..!
GRAVITY LENS EFFECT !?
THERE ARE FEW MALES AMONG THE ALCYONE TIGELLINUS, BUT IT SEEMS THEY ATTRACT FEMALES WITH THEIR BEAUTIFUL VOICES AND THEN FORM HAREMS
THE FEMALES CARRY FOOD AND CARE FOR THE THE BROOD AS THEY ACT IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE MALE.
R-RAVEN WAIT WAIT A SECOND !!

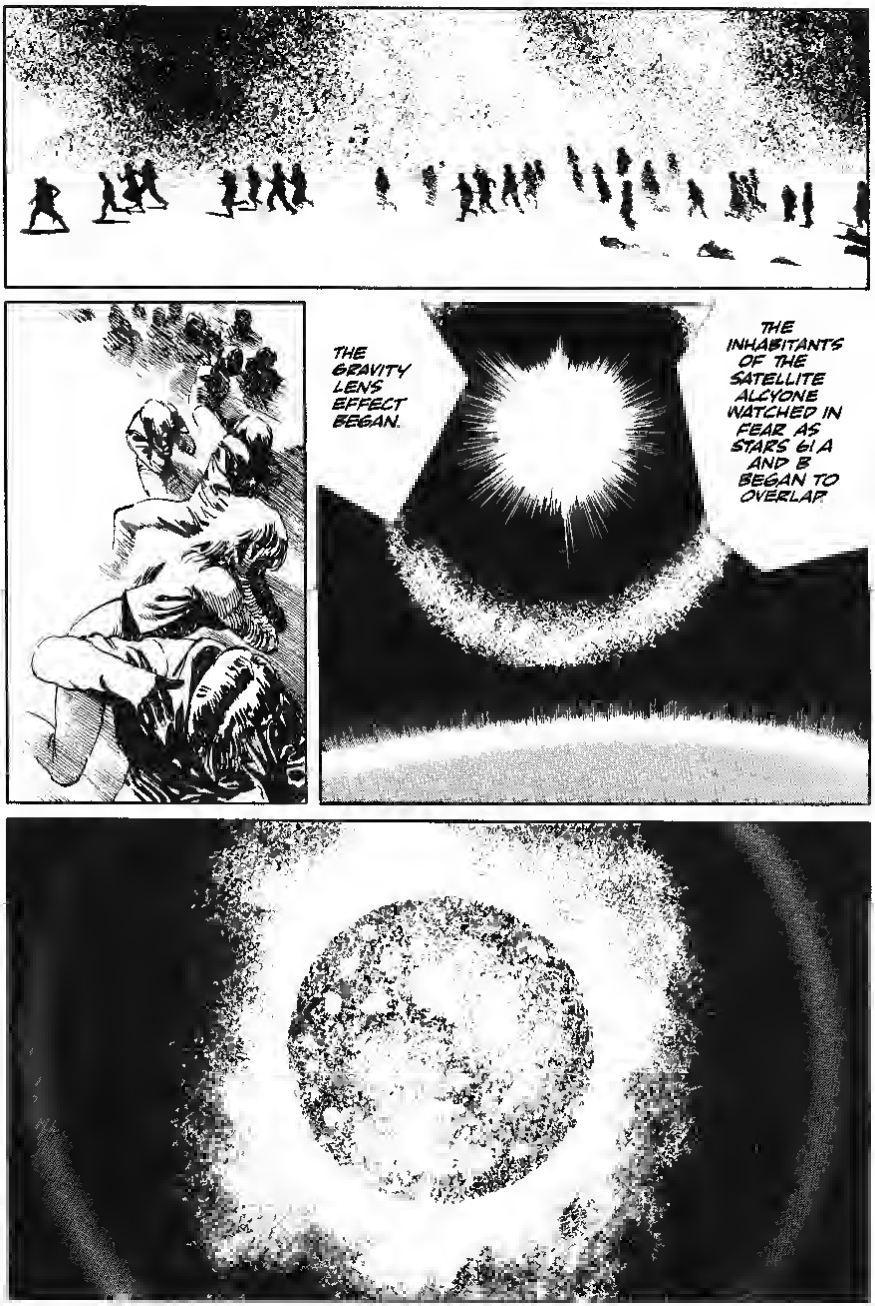
BLAM!
CAW
CAW
THE GRAVITY LENS EFFECT IS A PHENOMENON IN WHICH LIGHT IS REFRACTED IN SPACE THAT HAS BEEN WARPED BY GRAVITY.
IT CAN OCCUR WHEN A STAR AND A GRAVITY SOURCE ARE LINED UP IN ALMOST A STRAIGHT LINE--
A
B
--A GRAVITY SOURCE SUCH AS ANOTHER STAR. THE LIGHT FROM STAR A IS BENT BY THE GRAVITY FIELD OF STAR B AND FOCUSED ON A SINGLE POINT!

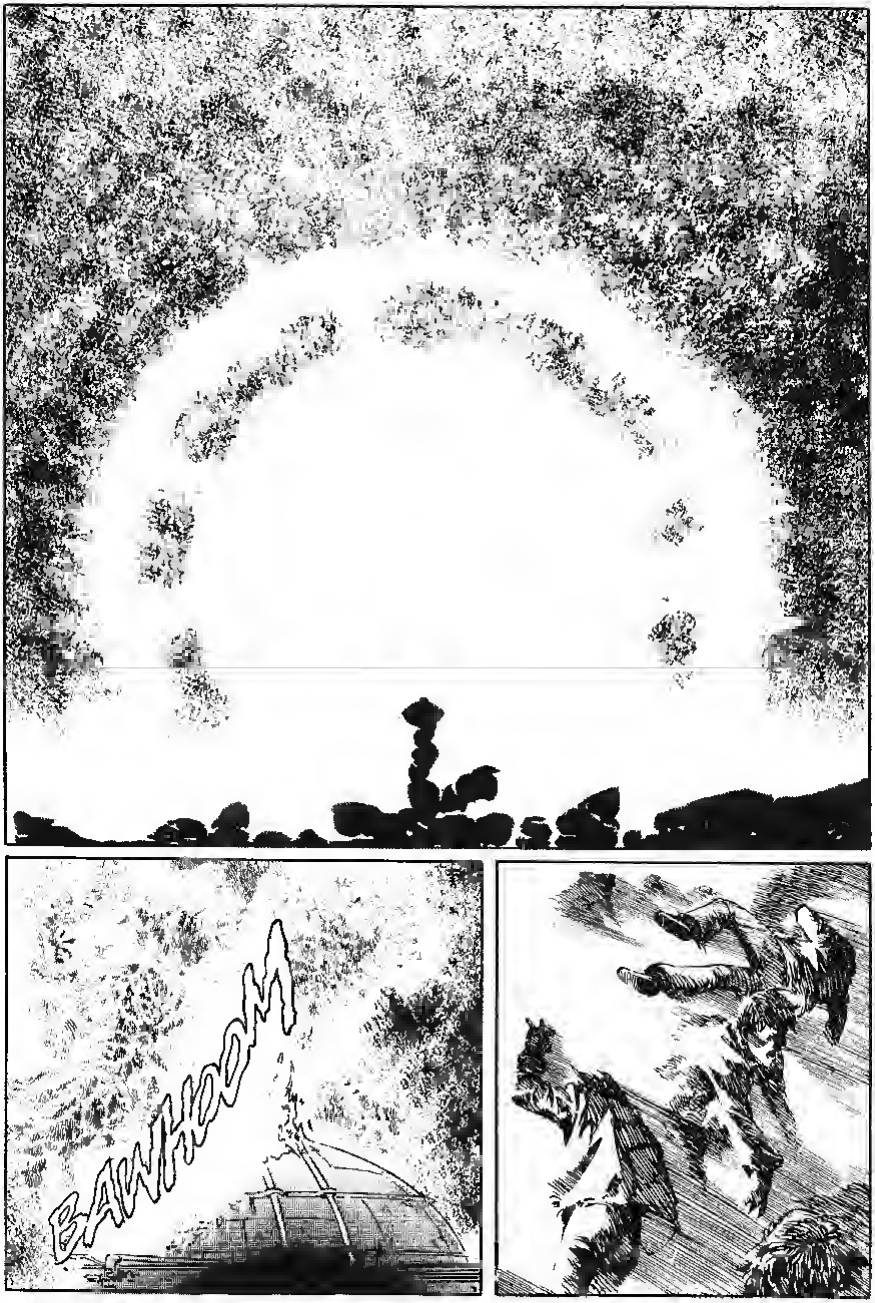
NOW, THE PLANET ALCYONE IS ABOUT TO ENTER INTO A STRAIGHT LINE WITH THE COMPANION STARS A AND B..
EXACTLY INSIDE THE FOCAL POINT!
A
B
BUT THESE RELATIVE POSITIONS SHOULD OCCUR LESS THAN ONCE EVERY TEN THOUSAND YEARS..
WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN WE ENTER THE FOCAL POINT !?
THE LIGHT FROM THE PRIMARY STAR A COULD INCREASE BY MANY TENFOLD... !
ALCYONE WILL BE COMPLETELY BURNED UP!

WE HAVE TO DECLARE A STATE OF EMERGENCY TO THE CITIZENS!
FIRST WE MUST PREPARE SPACESHIPS. HOW MANY USABLE SHIPS DO WE HAVE?
THERE'S NO MORE TIME...
THIS IS FATE
OUR FATE AS LIVING CREATURES... WITH ONLY AN HOUR'S SONG LEFT.. IN A BIRDLESS SKY.
HONEY!
HURRY! ONCE PEOPLE START PANICKING, IT'LL BE TOO LATE!
MAMA
EGRET, DON'T WORRY.
ROCK BIRD IS THE ONLY SHIP THAT CAN ACCOMODATE THE ENTIRE POPULATION, AND IT'S OUTSIDE OF ORBIT! WE CAN'T ESCAPE TO SPACE!
FOR NOW, WE'VE JUST GOT TO GET NORTH! IF WE CAN JUST GET AWAY FROM THE EQUATOR, THEN MAYBE..

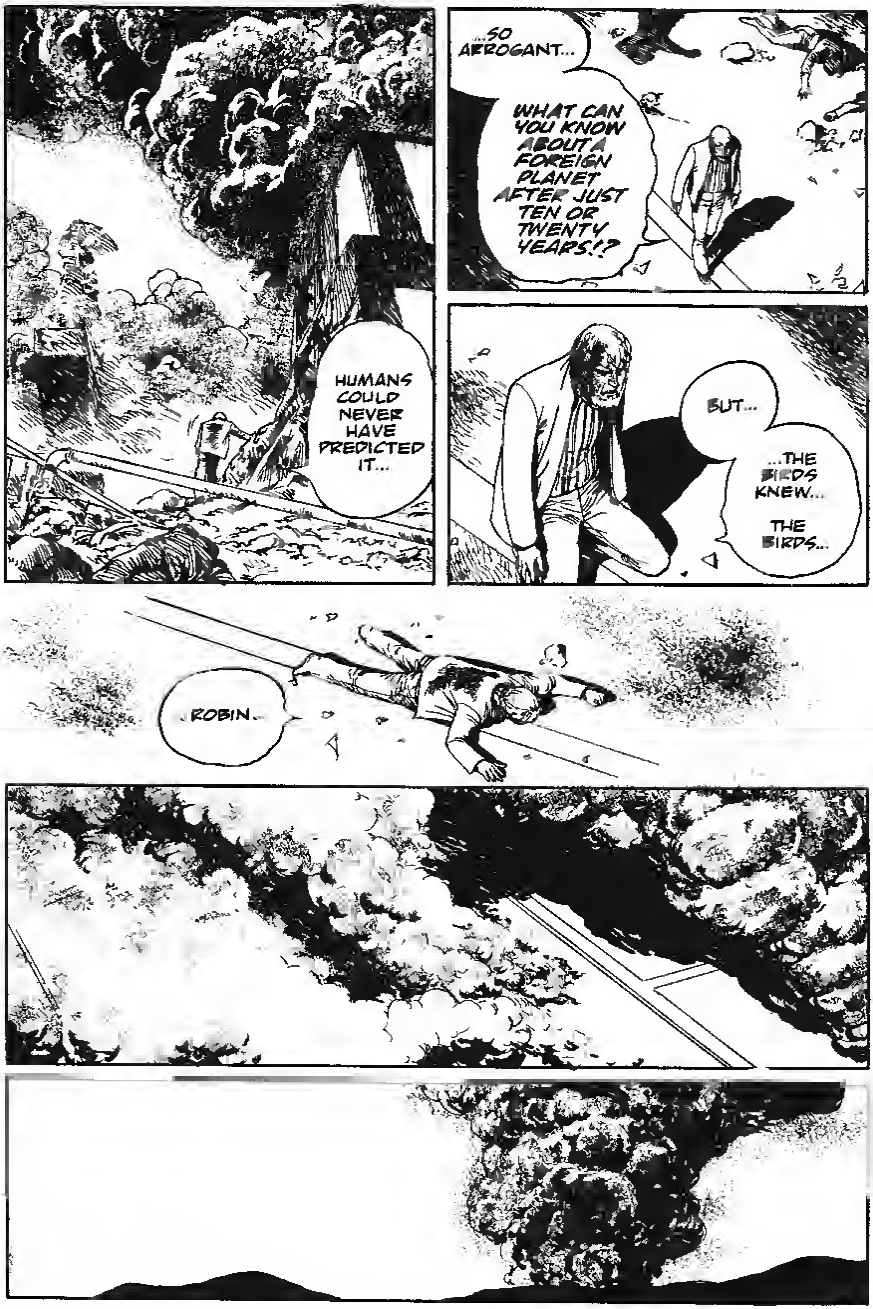
I FELT SAFE BECAUSE THE BIRDS HAD BEEN LIVING ON THIS PLANET FOR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS, BUT...
WAIT, PROFESSOR SHELDUCK. UNAUTHORIZED ACTIONS WILL NOT BE TOLERATED
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
HONEY!
PAPA!
J-JUST GET INSIDE...
VVSSHH

THE PRIMARY FOOD SOURCE OF THE ALCYONE TIGELLINUS IS FISH, AND IT SEEMS THESE BIRDS ALSO LAY THEIR EGGS IN THE OCEAN THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THEIR LIFESTYLE RELIES HEAVILY ON THESE
IF THIS IS THE CASE, THEN THE EVAPORATION OF THE OCEANS DUE TO THE RISE IN TEMPERATURE EVERY TEN THOUSAND YEARS SHOULD HAVE BEEN A FATAL DISASTER FOR THE BIRDS.
BUT SOMEHOW THEY SURVIVED.
JUST HOW HAVE THEY MANAGED TO WEATHER THE TIMES OF THE INFERNO...? ALL THAT CAN BE SAID IS THAT IT IS THE GREATEST OF MYSTERIES.
CAW
CAW
CAW
CAW

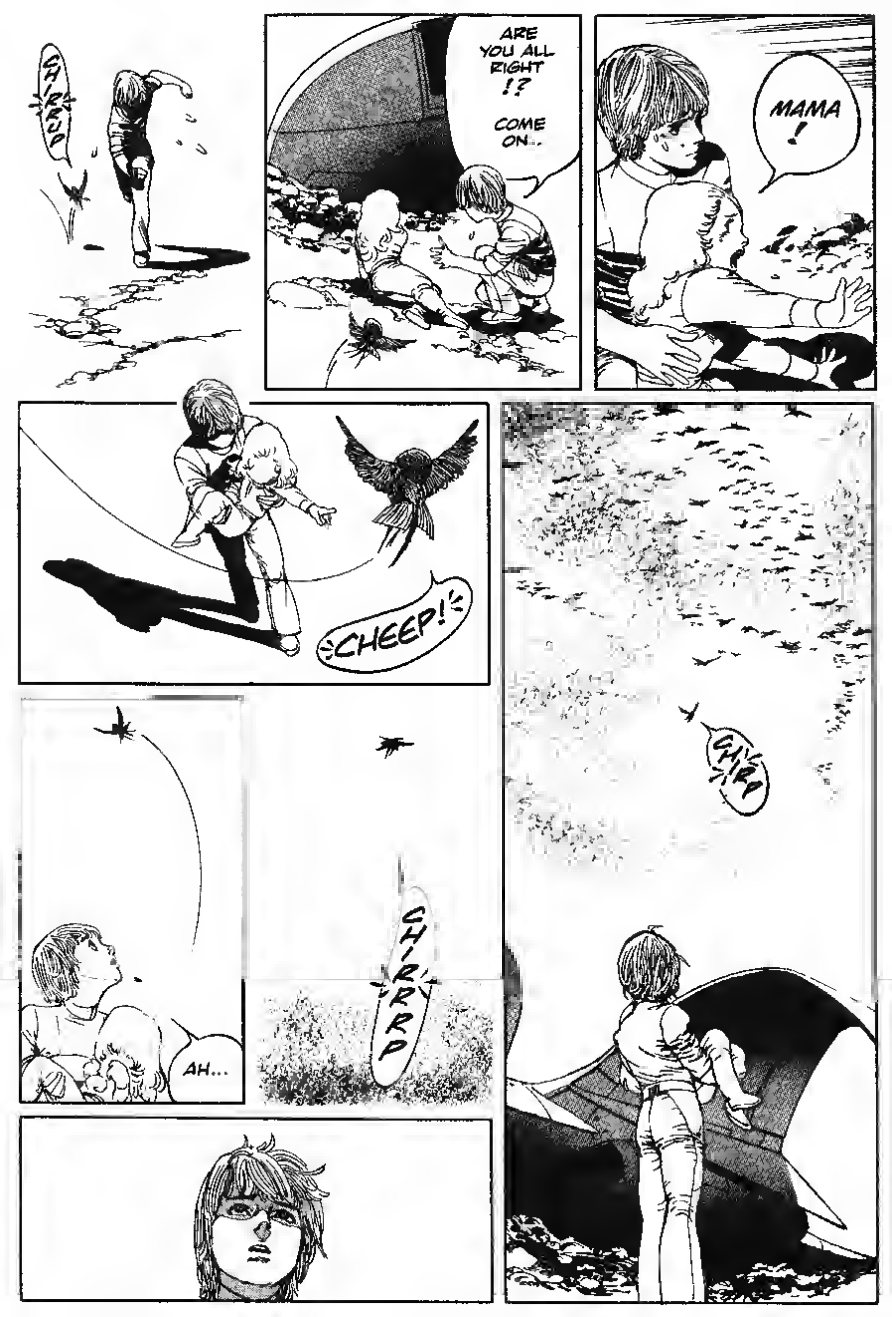

THE GRAVITY LENS EFFECT BEGAN.
THE INHABITANTS OF THE SATELLITE ALCYONE WATCHED IN FEAR AS STARS 61 A AND B BEGAN TO OVERLAP.

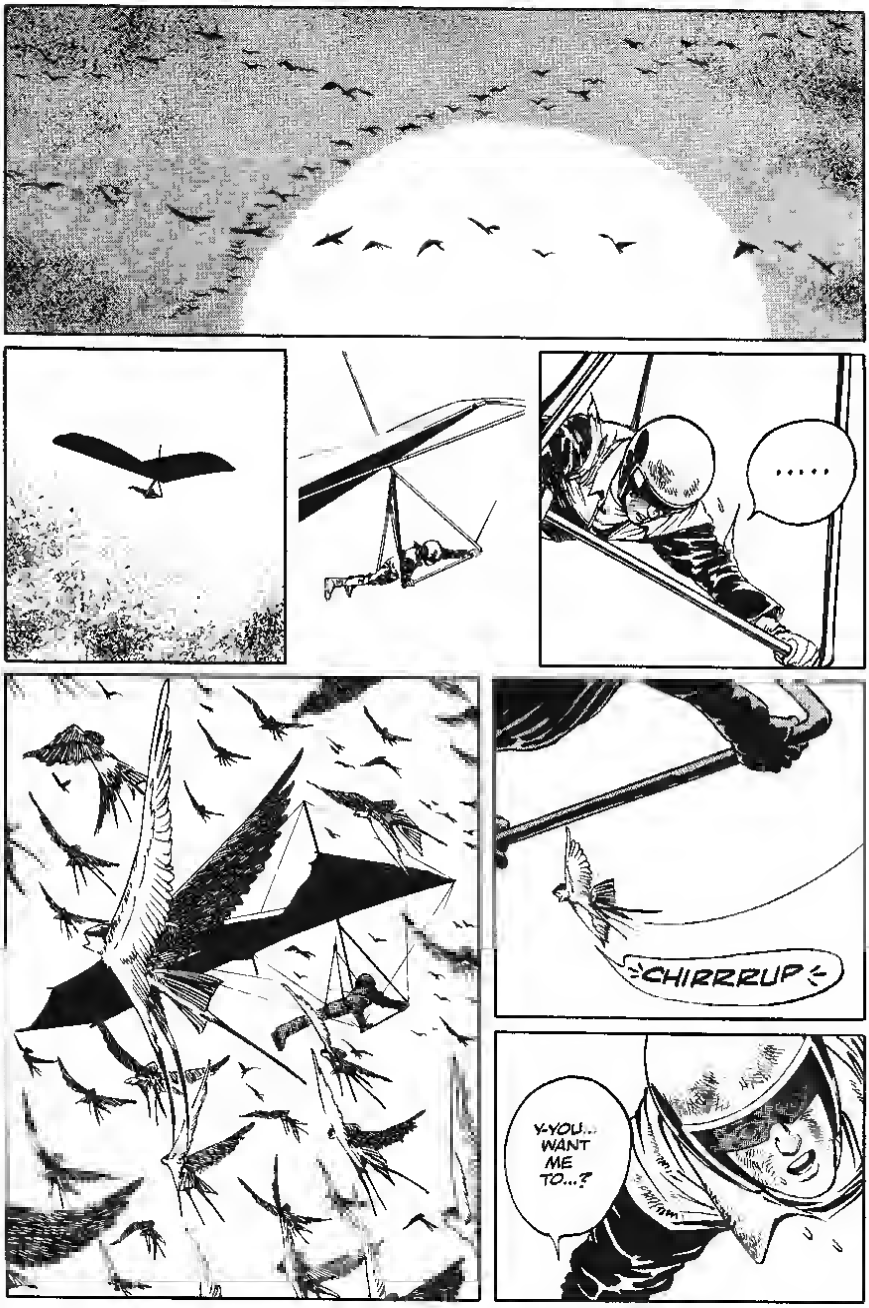

BAWHOOM

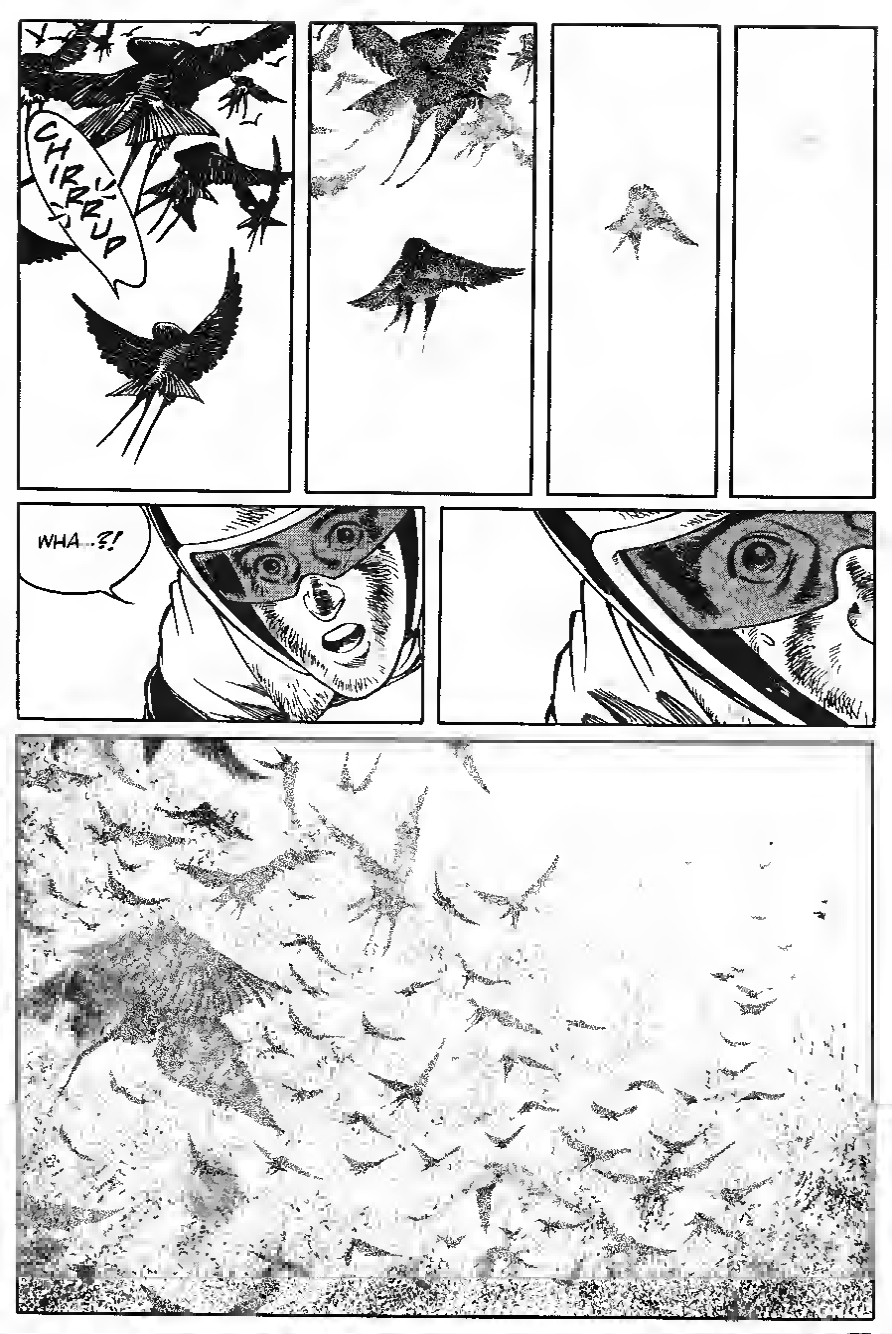
RAVEN!?
RAVEN! A-ARE YOU HERE, RAVEN !?
CAW CAW


HUMANS COULD NEVER HAVE PREDICTED IT...
...SO ARROGANT...
WHAT CAN YOU KNOW ABOUT A FOREIGN PLANET AFTER JUST TEN OR TWENTY YEARS!?
BUT...
...THE BIRDS KNEW...
THE BIRDS...
ROBIN...

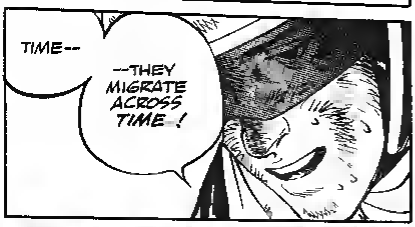
CHEEUP?
FATHER'S PLANE!?
VVSHSH
SKRAAK
MA . MAMA .

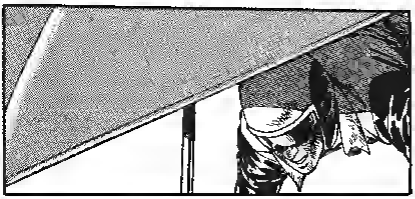

CHIRP
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!? COME ON..
MAMA!
CHEEP!
CHIRP
CHIRRRP
AH...

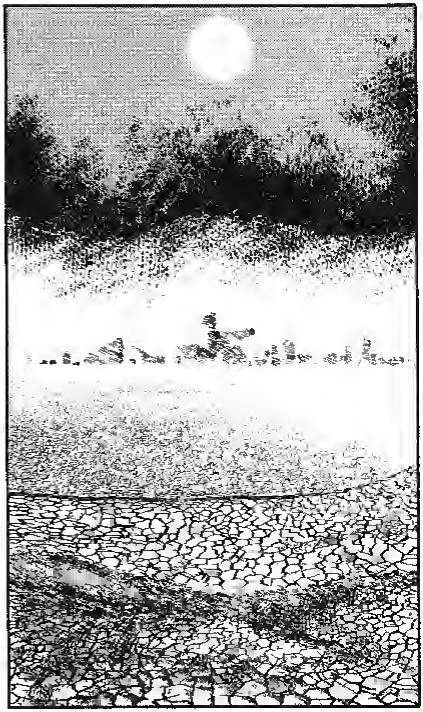

.....
CHIRRRUP
Y-YOU... WANT ME TO...?


CHIRRUP
WHA...?!

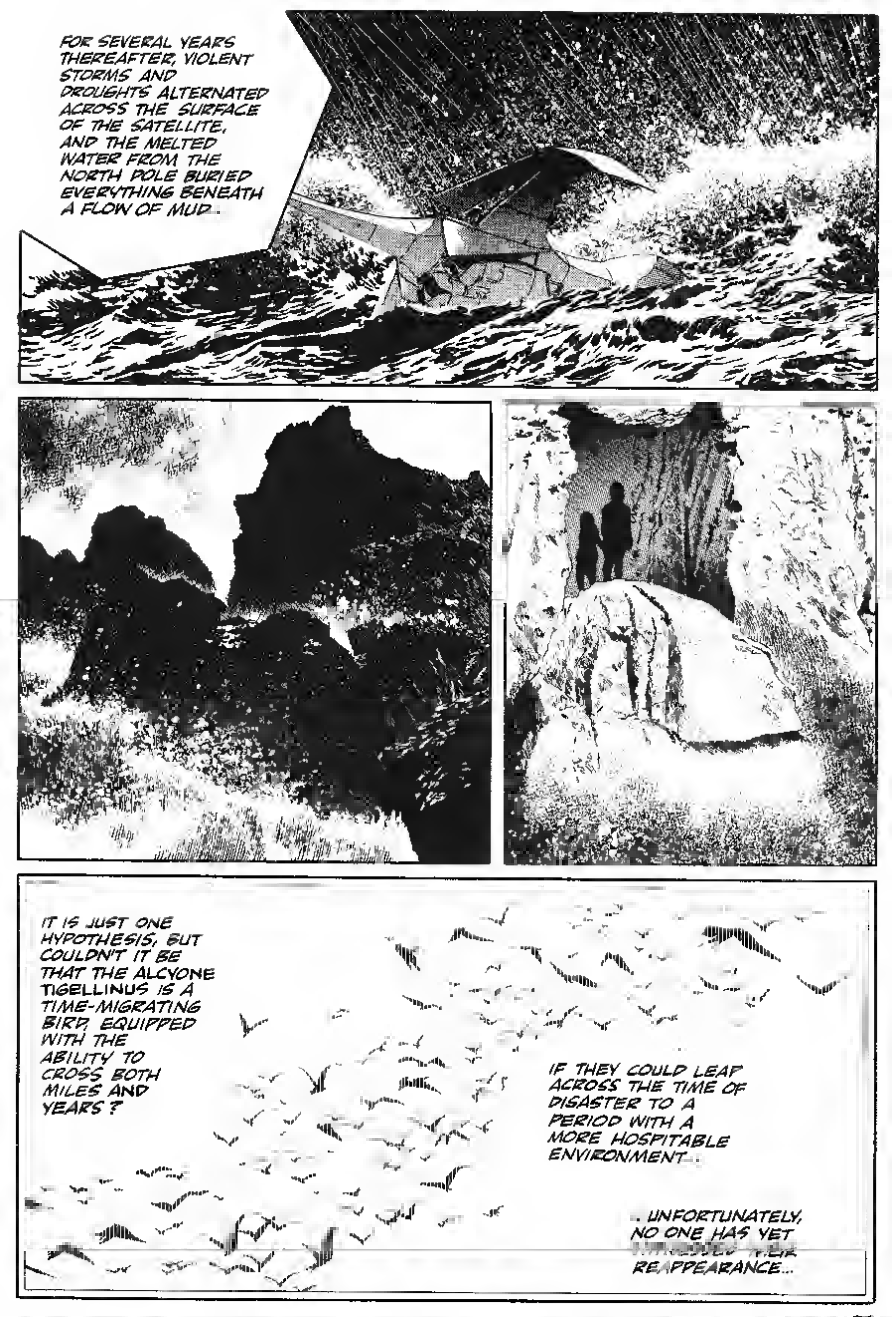
I I SEE

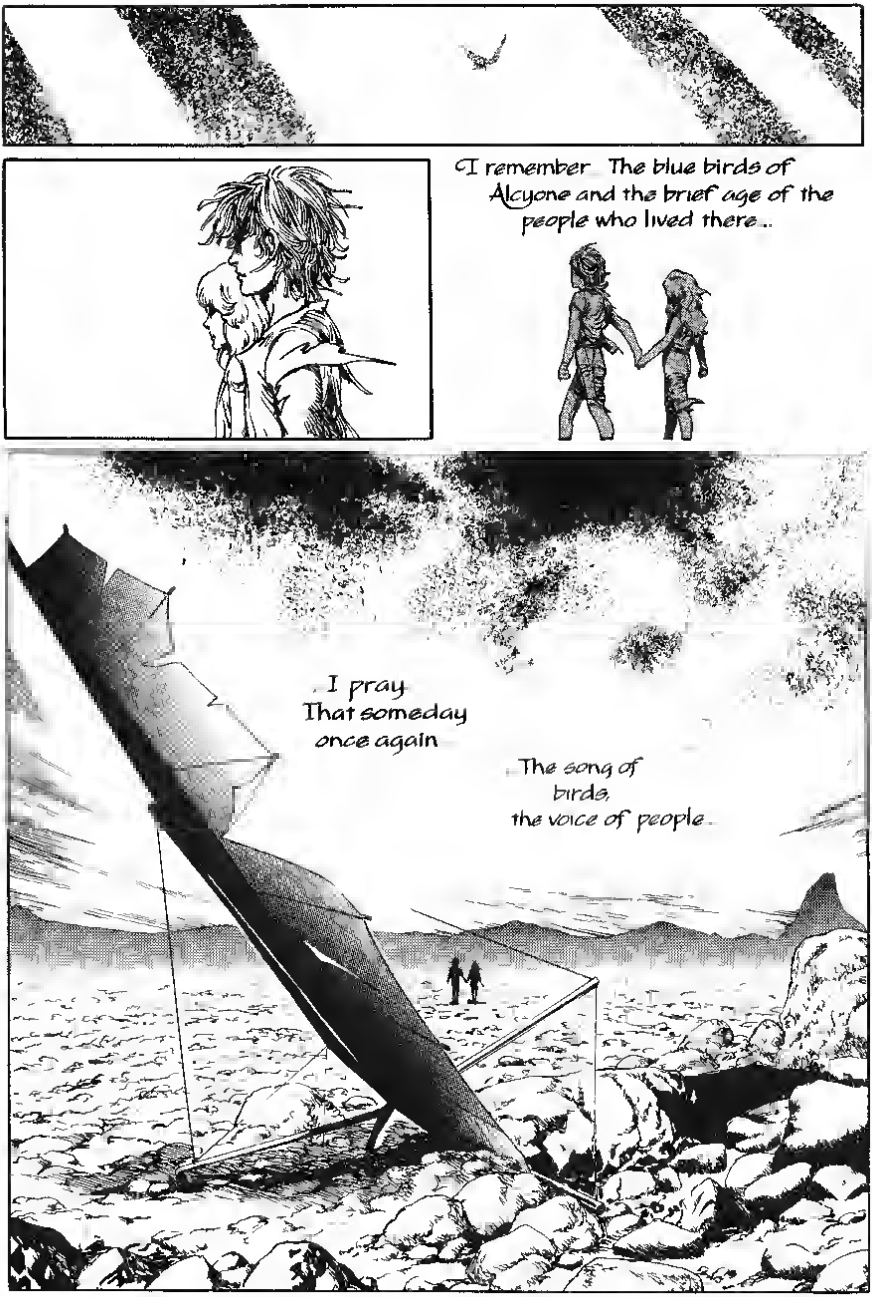

TIME--
--THEY MIGRATE ACROSS TIME !





THE SUDDEN RISE IN TEMPERATURE COMPLETELY DESTROYED THE BALANCE OF THE SATELLITE ALCYONE'S CLIMATE.


FOR SEVERAL YEARS THEREAFTER, VIOLENT STORMS AND DROUGHTS ALTERNATED ACROSS THE SURFACE OF THE SATELLITE, AND THE MELTED WATER FROM THE NORTH POLE BURIED EVERYTHING BENEATH A FLOW OF MUD...
IT IS JUST ONE HYPOTHESIS, BUT COULDN'T IT BE THAT THE ALCYONE TIGELLINUS IS A TIME-MIGRATING BIRD, EQUIPPED WITH THE ABILITY TO CROSS BOTH MILES AND YEARS?
IF THEY COULD LEAP ACROSS THE TIME OF DISASTER TO A PERIOD WITH A MORE HOSPITABLE ENVIRONMENT...
...UNFORTUNATELY, NO ONE HAS YET
REAPPEARANCE...


I remember. The blue birds of Alcyone and the brief age of the people who lived there...
I pray That someday once again
The song of birds, the voice of people.